

*Albert B. Ramsdell,
Salem, Mass.*

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OR,

The Nemesis of Nutmeg Bonanza.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "ROSE-
BUD ROB" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEMESIS OF NUTMEG.

THE full, round moon rode high and bright.
It was a night of exceeding beauty and one to
be welcomed.

A soft breeze was blowing, bearing upon its
breath the refreshing odors of wild flowers.

It was a night of nights in that sublime cli-
mate of Arizona; warm, of course, but not
hot, as it might have been without the cooling
breeze.

On a lonesome trail that led from the south, a

THE SILENCE WAS BROKEN BY THE APPARITION. IN A THRILLING TONE THE ONE
WORD WAS UTTERED: "DOOMED!"

horseman was riding northward, at an easy walk, the reins loosely held in his left hand, while his right rested upon his hip in a graceful way.

The horseman seemed to be in a thoughtful mood, paying little or no attention to his surroundings. The animal he rode was coal-black, and only a glance was needed to learn that it was high mettled. Its mountings were elegant, and glistened and flashed in the moonlight with every movement.

But our interest is with the rider. He was a man of medium size, good-looking, with piercing black eyes and a graceful mustache. At first glance there is something familiar about his features, and we are on the point of speaking his name, but looking again, we hesitate. Can it be he? we question. It is his peculiar attire that baffles us. He wears a hat of finest white felt, the brim of which is caught up in front and held with a cluster of diamonds. From his shoulders hangs a black cape of some light material, enveloping his form to the saddle. Below that his legs and feet are to be seen, the latter incased in boots of finest patent-leather, while a flashing gold line marks the outside seam of his trousers.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., was the name that was upon our lips, but we had to pause in much doubt. The face and features were his, certainly, but was it—could it be he? Ha! he looks up! Yes, he it is—the redoubtable Richard Bristol—he, and none other.

"What a lovely night!" he ejaculated in admiration, as he looked about him.

Drawing a handsome watch from under his cape, or cloak, he noted the hour.

"Ten o'clock," he mused. "I must be getting near there. No doubt that line of hills marks the location of the town. Another hour, old fellow, and we'll be there; but we must move faster than this."

He touched the horse as he put away his watch, and it bounded forward in a long, easy gallop.

Gradually the line of hills drew near, as it seemed, and finally the trail led into a wild canyon, where the shadows hovered deep and black.

Here the black horse dropped again into a walk, to which the rider offered no objection, and in that manner they started to thread their way through the narrow mountain defile.

They had proceeded half a mile, perhaps, when they came to a branching canyon, where the broader opening overhead allowed the moon to cast her beams to the rocky floor, lighting up a space of several yards' extent.

The black steed was about to cross this circle of light, when suddenly it stopped, with forefeet braced, and laid its ears forward.

Bristol looked quickly up to learn the cause of this unexpected halt, and a rather startling sight met his gaze.

Just across the circle of light, at a point of rock where the two canyons joined, a polished rifle-barrel gleamed in the moonlight, and behind it appeared the head and shoulders of a man.

The rest of the man was hid behind a big boulder that had somewhat the appearance of a preacher's pulpit, and which appearance, by the way, had won for the spot the name of "Gospel Corner." What of him was visible, however, was enough to establish his character, for he was a decidedly hard-looking customer.

"He, haw, haw!" the fellow broke out laughing, "thet aire boss o' yourn, mister, hev evidently bin thar afore, ef appearances count fer anything. He comes ter time like he had larnt ther trick in ther days of yore."

"Yes, my horse is a knowing animal," Dick responded, coolly. "He has a great dislike to carrion, and hates to pass a point where he gets a whiff of it. I reckon that is what's the trouble here."

"Wull, dast yer pictur', anyhow!" the man behind the rifle cried, angrily. "Ef ye wasn't so durn good-lookin', I'd bore ye oncet fer luck, be gum! Whew! but you be a sparkler, and no mistook!"

Dick was just in the moonlight, where the fellow had a good look at him, and he certainly did make a noble picture against the black background.

First, his white hat, with the brim pinned up in front with the cluster of diamonds; beneath that, his handsome face, with the flashing black eyes and glossy mustache; then the black cape, or cloak, open in front just enough to let the light disclose other diamonds, and buttons of gold; in front of all the shapely head of the horse, with its glittering ornaments. Little wonder the man uttered the exclamation.

"Well, what is your pleasure?" Dick in-

quired. "You seem to have it all your own way."

"Thet aire about ther size of it, mister, I opine myself," was the response. "I am hyar on business, you kin gamble high on that. I'm a warbler when I sing, too, and I'm a-singin' now. By ther way, jest elevate yer fins so that yer won't be tempted ter try drawin' a popper. I don't want ter see ye commit susancide, but I warn ye that's what it would be, sooner than quick."

Dick held up his hands.

"I like to observe these finer points of etiquette," he remarked, cheerfully. "I believe it is customary, out here, when such a request is made, backed by a Colt or Winchester, for the 'other feller' to come right to time. Have you any further directions to give?"

"You hev got hoss sense, anyhow," observed the man behind the rock. "Et aire one of ther safest things in ther world ter do, when ther business-end of a pop is p'inted your way. Now, jest hold yer fins where they be, an' I'll amble around thar an' relieve you of some of yer sooperfloods wealth."

"Let me put in a word right here," Dick blandly requested.

"Say your say," the man granted leave, "but don't be too long about it. Time is money ter me."

"I'm afraid it won't be much money in this instance," Dick ventured to prophesy. "You are likely to fetch up against a snag, the first thing you know. You can't keep me covered and go through me at the same time, and I warn you if you lose your drop on me for one second I'll toss a bit of lead in your direction."

"Ef et comes ter that," was the grim response, "I kin go through ye first, with a ounce o' ther metal you mention, and then I opine et won't be much trouble ter go through ye ther other way."

"Possibly not, if you make a good job of it. You want to draw a fine bead, however, and let your first shot do the business up brown. If you leave a squirm in me, it may prove detrimental to your good health."

"Wull I ber durn!" the would-be toll-taker exclaimed, admiringly, "but you has got narvel! Say, who be ye, anyhow? Whar is yer goin'? Whar d'ye hail from?"

"You want to know a good deal, and all at once, too," remarked Dick, "but I guess I can afford to enlighten you on the several points named. I am called Golconda the Gorgeous. I am headed for the town of Nutmeg Bonanza, and had some prospect of getting there before you popped up. Where I came from does not matter."

"Golconda ther Gorgeous, hey? Thet aire ar' a highfalutin' handle, and no mistook about that p'int. And you aire gorgeous, too, be gum! You're a sparkler, as I said afore, and you is 'most too pooty ter die."

"Well, come, what are you going to do about it?" Dick demanded. "If you mean to shoot me, go ahead. If not, let me ride on."

"You is a cool one, sure, and I'd hate like smoke ter kill yer, fer ye wouldn't be near as pooty dead as ye aire alive. Dead yer will be, none ther less, ef ye make one move out of yer present pozish. Keep yer eyes fixed on ther muzzle o' my gun, now, and I'll come around thar and oversee ther job while ye unload."

The fellow had been partly leaning over the rock, up to this time. Now he rose erect, still keeping the rifle at his shoulder, and was about to step out from behind the boulder when another actor appeared upon the scene.

Dick's horse snorted and sprung back, as a form in white glided into the moonlit circle from the deep shadows of the branching canyon at the right.

It was that of a woman, and in the moonlight her white garments took on a ghostly weirdness. On her head was a lengthened white hood, so that nothing of her person was to be seen save one hand.

The right hand was raised, and the index finger pointed at the fellow behind the rock.

At the sudden appearance of this personage, the man allowed the butt of his rifle to fall from his shoulder, and consequently lost the "drop" he had so far carefully maintained, with the result to give the alert Dick the one precious moment in which to make himself master of the situation.

Speaking sharply to the horse to quiet it, he urged him forward again to the place he had occupied, and with a gold-mounted revolver in his right hand, "Richard was himself again."

The change in the situation, all around, had taken place in less time than it takes to write the words describing it.

There remained a moment of silence, in which the three persons lent themselves to making a striking tableau.

The silence was broken by the apparition. In a thrilling tone the word was uttered:

"Doomed!"

Then the lifted right arm slowly fell, and the specter, if such it was, glided noiselessly out of the circle of light and vanished, seeming to melt away in the silence of the shadows beyond.

The would-be toll-taker stood as though unable to move or speak. His eyes were wide open and filled with an expression of commingled horror and astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Dick, struck with the ludicrousness of the situation. "Rouse up, there, my noble road-agent, and get yourself together. That charming ghost seems to have knocked you clear out of time. If you look close you will see that the tables are turned now, and that I am boss of the circus. Just bend yourself and lay that rifle on the ground, and don't wait. I am in a hurry, now!"

Dick's voice had the effect to arouse the fellow, for he turned quickly to find himself covered by that glittering five-shooter.

Without demur he laid his rifle down.

"And now your revolver, too," Dick further directed.

The man obeyed, with little concern.

"Et don't make no difference now," he said, "and ef ye want ter bore me, do it. My jig is up!"

"Why, how is that?" Dick inquired.

"Yer heard ther sentence, didn't ye? Within twenty-four hours I'll be a dead man. Thet ar' specter aire ther Nemesis o' Nutmeg!"

CHAPTER II.

A PECULIAR PLEDGE.

THE wide-awake detective was now himself the subject of interest and surprise.

"And who is this Nemesis of Nutmeg?" he quickly asked.

"Yer knows as much about her as I does," was the answer. "Her ghost allus appears afore her agent strikes."

"Her agent? Who is her agent? Come, my man, you have got me interested in the matter," Dick urged. "I have had dealings with ghosts before, but they have always turned out to be flesh and blood."

"This one ain't, though. Couldn't yer tell that by her awful voice? It was a ghost, and one that allus appears just afore th' Nemesis does his deadly work. I'm as good as dead and buried."

"Nonsense! All you have got to do is to shake the dust of this neighborhood off your boots and get out—that is, if I allow you to do so. I ought to take you to the town and turn you over to the jailer, if there's one there."

"Which there ain't. No, et wouldn't be no use. I'd meet my fate anyhow. Et wur what Bull-neck Mike tried ter do, after he seen th' ghost. He lit right out, but he wur found dead on ther trail next day, forty miles from town. No; I'm in fer it, so what is ther use o' kickin'?"

"But this Nemesis—tell me all about the matter. At first you said the ghost was the Nemesis, but now you say it is some one else. What reason have you to fear the avenging hand? What have you done, to merit the fate to which you have been sentenced? As I am going to Nutmeg Bonanza, it may be well to know something about this mysterious personage. I answered your questions when you held the better hand, and it is your turn now to answer mine."

"Wull, I'll do it. I am called, and there is no use o' my tryin' ter dodge it. Ther ghost never warns but oncet, and then ther blow follers swift an' sure. I don't expect ter see ther sun git up ter-morrer mornin'. Yer see, this hyar avenger is p'izen death on all sorts o' evil, an' in that line my hands ain't none too clean. Et hev been a long time comin', but et hev got hyar jest ther same, an' afore ter-morrer night you will hear o' Blossom Bob's suddint takin' off."

"If that is the case, Blossom Robert," Dick observed, "you have had timely warning, and ought to profit by it. I'll let you go, and you may do what you can toward making ready for your fate. But, can't you tell me more? How many victims have fallen by this avenger's hand, to date?"

"I reckon I'm ther seventh," answered Blossom Bob, speaking of himself as already disposed of.

"And within how short a time?" Dick inquired.

"I reckon it's nigh a year since Growlin' Hank got his dose, an' he was the fu'st on the ther list."

"Your Nemesis certainly means business, then. Now, as a person never begins a vendetta of this sort without some good reason, what is the reason in this instance? I have no doubt but you seven rascals, and perhaps more with you, have wronged some person greatly, and are paying the penalty. How about it?"

"Ther fact is you're right. But thet aire all I kin tell ye, as I'm sworn ter hold my head shut about it an'—"

"But, with death at hand, as you believe, you ought to make a clean breast of the matter, and—"

"Et can't be done. Ef I 'scaped ther Nemesis which I ain't likely ter do, I would meet a fate as sure from another direction. Then too, there's my pard, what is left of 'em, they'd be— But look hyar, I'm done talkin'. I reckon I've said too much now. You'd better ride on."

"What was your intention in stopping me as you did?" Dick further questioned. "Had you any other purpose than that of robbery?"

"No, thet wur all. Et would hev been a daisy haul, too, only fer th' ghost appearin' when it did and upsettin' my narves."

"I am not so sure about that," Dick asseverated. "Still, I feel grateful to the ghost for its timely coming. I—"

He was about to add more, when the rascal before him suddenly clapped his hand to his breast, and cried:

"I've got it!"

With that he reeled, fell back on the boulder, and dropped to the ground in the throes of death.

Deadwood Dick was mystified, now.

He had heard no shot, but recognized the work of a bullet.

While he hesitated, in doubt whether to get off his horse or not, a voice called to him out of the darkness.

"Stranger, attention," were the words spoken.

"Do you address me?" Deadwood Dick asked, looking in the direction whence the voice came, but seeing nothing.

"I do," was the answer. "I have something to say to you."

"Well, I am all attention," Dick assured, "and you are welcome to say anything you please. I would rather have you come out where I can see you, though, for I like to face a person I'm talking to."

"I prefer to remain invisible. You have seen me once, let that suffice. I am the ghostly personage that appeared before you a few moments ago. I am the Nemesis of Nutmeg, so called."

It was a woman's voice that spoke, but Dick could not decide just where it came from. He had the direction, but it seemed to come from a point high up, as though from mid-air in the branching canyon.

"Very well, I will not press the point," he acquiesced, promptly. "I have due respect for ghosts, and especially those of the gentle sex. What do you desire to say to me?"

"You still admit, of course, that I have done you a favor?"

"You refer to your appearing upon the scene at the time when this fellow had the advantage of me?"

"Yes, I refer to that."

"Well, yes, you certainly did help me out of a rather ugly fix."

"You are a stranger to me, but I have been studying your face from the darkness here, and am impressed that you are an honest man. I do not ask you whether you are or are not; I know I am not mistaken. I want a favor in return."

"You have only to name it," Dick assured, "and if it is anything within reason, and in the line of honest work, you can depend on my doing it."

"Thank you, sir. It comes within the requirements of both your conditions, so I will tell you what it is."

"I shall be glad to have you do so."

"Are you going to Nutmeg Bonanza?"

"That is my objective point, Lady Ghost."

"I thought so, from what I caught of your talk with that miserable wretch, Blossom Bob. He is my second victim within twenty-four hours."

"Then it was you who took his life?"

"It was."

"I imagine, then, that there is little about you that is ghostly, save your appearance."

"We will pass that. I must come to the request I have to make."

"Well, let me know what it is."

"There is, at Nutmeg, a young man whose life is in danger. I want you to pledge yourself to see that he comes to no harm."

"Well, this is rather a serious pledge to require of a stranger," Dick made comment aloud. "I must know all the particulars before I can promise anything of that kind."

"It is your right to know them. About ten o'clock last night a citizen of the town fell suddenly dead in the street, with a bullet in his heart. His name was Joe Gables, and it was by my hand that he fell. Only a little time earlier in the evening he had had a quarrel with the young man I have mentioned, whose name is Esmond Earle. The quarrel was provoked by Gables, and in the heat of it both men uttered threats of a serious nature."

"I knew nothing of this till afterward. When Gables fell, some of his friends set up the cry that Earle had killed him, and soon a mob was howling for his life. He was captured, and as it happened, one chamber of his revolver was empty. Then two or three rascals swore that they had heard a shot fired, and the case against him looked bad."

"A young woman at the only hotel of the place, however, appeared upon the scene, and said that she was looking out at her window when Gables fell, and that she did not hear any shot. She called upon the honest men of the town to see that Earle had a fair trial, and he was taken and locked in a deserted log cabin that was pressed into service as a temporary jail."

"Now you have the case just as it is. The young man is still there, and his trial is to come off to-morrow. I have fears that it will go hard with him, for the bad element is greatly in the majority in the town. And now I come back to the starting-point. I want you to pledge yourself to see that he comes to no harm, for I assure you that he is as innocent as you are."

"You seem to have unbounded confidence in me," Dick observed. "What would one man be against a mob? Are you not asking too much?"

"I hope I am not. An ordinary man would amount to nothing, of course, to oppose such a bloodthirsty set of rascals; but I am satisfied that you are more than ordinary."

"Thank you for the compliment, anyhow; but tell me, what gives you this opinion of me?"

"I noted the coolness with which you met the challenge of Blossom Bob. No ordinary man would have acted as you did."

"Pshaw! But, we will let that pass. Why do you not appear to the citizens of the town and assure them of their mistake?"

"I have notified them, in my own way, but I am not sure that they will give due weight to my words."

"Did you add a threat to your communication?"

"No, I did not think of that."

"That would have checked their ardor a little, I imagine. There is time enough for that yet, if necessary. You might threaten to put them on your little list, if they harm Earle."

"A good idea, and I will bear it in mind. But, your promise—will you undertake what I have asked?"

"I will. If I can be of service to Esmond Earle in any way, he can count on me, and to that I pledge myself."

"Thank you. You will lose nothing by it. Now I will say good-night."

"Will you not allow me to see you ere you go?"

"You have seen me once, let that be enough."

"But tell me something about yourself."

"Not now. Once more, good-night."

Deadwood Dick responded, and silence reigned over the scene.

CHAPTER III.

SPOILING A SOIREE.

DICK waited some minutes.

Not another sound was to be heard.

He was alone, now, save for the dead man.

While he waited he was debating whether or not to investigate the pockets of the late Blossom Robert.

Finally he decided against that proceeding. In the first place, he was not likely to find anything of interest, he reasoned; and next, it would be an ugly business to be caught at, if any one happened along.

"It is well to leave good-enough alone," he decided. "My little difficulty with the gentleman is over, and I will be on my way. Sorry I didn't ask which one of these canyons leads to Nutmeg, but I guess it's the main one. Go along, old fellow," to his horse, "and we'll see if we can reach our destination without further adventures by the way."

The horse started forward, at the word, and

horse and rider disappeared into the darkness, leaving the dead man lying there in the moonlit space.

Deadwood Dick had much to think about, now.

He had passed through a strange and peculiar adventure.

To be stopped by a road-agent was nothing new in his experience, but to be helped out of the dilemma by a ghostly deliverer was.

"Adventure seems determined to spring up in my path wherever I go," he mused as he rode along. "Here I find myself pledged to protect a man I have never seen before, and that pledge given to a ghostly self-confessed slayer of several men. What is back of all this? Richard, my boy, you may find that you have taken hold of a sizable job before you get done with it. It is better, however, to stand in with this ghostly avenger than to fight against her, I imagine; and since she is opposed to evil, the combination may not prove amiss. She may be able to help me in the case I have on hand, and that has brought me here."

So musing, he rode on through the dark and dismal defile.

Finally the loud hum of many commingled voices came to his ears, and a little later he rode out into an open glade, or pocket.

It broadened rapidly from the head of the canyon, spreading into a valley of a goodly acreage, in the middle of which stood a town of perhaps a hundred buildings, all told.

But Deadwood Dick gave no more than a passing glance at these points.

There was something of more immediate importance to claim his attention and attract his interest.

The one street of the town was alive with people, and the hum of voices that he had heard while yet in the canyon was now grown to a mighty roar.

Under the radiant moon the gulch was almost as light as day, and Dick could see what was going on. The excited crowd was moving toward him, and in the hands of the foremost was a prisoner.

They were evidently heading toward, or rather for, a big tree that was only a little distance out of the town on that side.

"It looks like a neck-tie party, I'm blowed if it don't!" Dick muttered. "Possibly the mob intends to lynch that Esmond Earle that I am pledged to protect. If that be the case, the campaign is destined to open with a lively skirmish, and my debut at Nutmeg Bonanza is likely to be accompanied with the lively jingle of bells. Anyhow, I must know what is going on. Forward, old fellow, or we may be too late to be of any use to the unfortunate victim of the nocturnal jollification."

Touching his horse, the animal sprang into a run, and Dick aimed to meet the crowd at the tree.

He had much the greater distance to cover, however, and the mob got there first, and so noisy were they, and so intent upon their desperate mission, that they did not see him approaching.

As he came near he heard a voice call out:

"Now, then, Esmond Earle, ef yer has got anything ter say, say it mighty quick. Yer hain't got no more'n a minnit o' time hyar on yarth."

"Ha!" exclaimed Dick, "it is my protegee, sure enough. I shall have to chip in here, sure."

He halted a few yards from the outer edge of the crowd, still unobserved, and took in the situation.

A rope was around the intended victim's neck, that rope was over a convenient limb, and a dozen men had hold upon the other end of it.

"All I have to say," rung out a clear voice, in response to the first, "is that I am an innocent man, and that you are a pack of cowardly murderers. All I asked of you was a fair trial, and you are too villainous to allow me even that. Go ahead and do your worst. You'll find that I'm no craven cur. Go on with your hellish work."

Deadwood Dick listened with glowing admiration.

Here was a man of nerve, and one well worthy of the help he had promised.

"Yas, we'll go on, you bet we wull!" cried the first speaker. "We has got all ther proof we wants that you is ther cuss what done it up fer poor Joe Gables, an' you got ter swing. 'Cause yer says yer is innercent, that don't make it so, not by a hatful it don't. Grip ther rope, boyees, an' when I say three, jest elevate him."

The men at the rope gave an answering shout, saying they were ready, and the mob yelled wildly an approval.

"One," the master of ceremonies counted, in a loud tone.

The men at the rope drew it tight, and braced themselves for the pull.

"Two," was called out in like manner, and everything was ready for the final signal.

Instead of that signal, though, came the ringing order:

"HOLD!"

Every eye turned, to behold Deadwood Dick with two gold-flashidg revolvers in hand, covering them all.

The sudden presence of the stranger, and his superb bearing and magnificent appearance, sent athrill of fear and admiration through the crowd.

It was a sight to rivet the attention of any one, and to win the admiration of even the most blunted intellect. Horse and rider made a picture, in the white radiance of the moonlight, that any *salon* might envy.

For several seconds no one moved or spoke.

Deadwood Dick was the first to break the silence.

"Drop that rope," he ordered, sternly.

The rope was dropped instantly, and it was done mechanically. The rascals who had it in hand recognized a master-spirit in the man who uttered the command.

But now the spell was broken, and a hum began to vibrate the night air as every man questioned his neighbor, in an undertone, as to who the stranger could be. No one there had ever seen him before.

"Look 'e hyar," cried the *ex*-master of ceremonies, glaring at Dick with as terrible expression as he could bring upon his homely face, "who be ye? What right hev yer ter interfere in what don't concern ye?"

This man was one Lambert Cobbletree, popularly known as "Lanky Lam." He was a sort of local chief, and the ringleader of the worst element in the town's social make-up. He had the reputation, too, of being a decidedly "bad" man.

The prisoner, too, had turned with the rest, and Dick saw that he was a good-looking young man of noble appearance and bearing.

"You make a big mistake," the redoubtable Richard promptly returned. "This matter does concern me, and for that reason I chip in. Take that rope from around your prisoner's neck, and do it quick."

"Great monnymint o' Patience!" Mr. Cobbletree, screamed, "be you a-talkin' ter me—me?"

"Yes, I'm talking to you," Dick assured. "I'll give you just five seconds to obey, too! If you don't, then I'll ballast you with lead. Come, get a gait on you, or down you go."

There was a ring to the order that brooked no delay.

Lanky Lam lost no time in doing as he had been told, and the rope was removed and dropped.

"Thar," he stormed, "thar et aire, seein' as you hold the joker this hand. I warn yer that ther game ain't ended, though; no, not by a mighty sight it ain't! Ef I don't miss my guess, you'll come in fer a halter if ye tarry long in these parts."

"Plenty of time to talk about that," Dick observed. "In the present instance you can further oblige me by freeing your prisoner's hands and allowing him to go. I am in no mood to be trifled with, I warn you."

"No—I ber everlastin'ly consarned ef we does!" Lanky Lam howled in protest.

"In course we won't," supported the crowd. "He's killed a man, an' he's got ter swing fer it!"

"That's what's ther matter!" yelled Lanky. "Who be you, anyhow, you dandy jackanapes? What right have yer got ter chip in hyar? Git holt o' thet rope ag'in, fellers, an' we'll show—"

"Let any man touch that rope," Deadwood Dick warned, cool as an iceberg, "and he is as good as dead already. Keep your hands away from your weapons, too, every one of you, or you will hear a blast from the bugle of the angel of roll-call that will waft you hence before you can wink. Once more, you, sir, release that prisoner, or die!"

This was addressed to Lanky Lam, and one of Dick's revolvers covered his heart as the command was given.

The big bullwhacker turned pale, and with muttered curses proceeded to follow instructions. In a moment Esmond Earle was free, so far as concerned the use of arms and legs.

"Now, Mr. Earle," the rescuer invited, "step out here, if you please, and we'll see what they're going to do about it."

The young man did so, no one offering to op-

pose his going, and when he had gained Dick's side, and faced around, Dick demanded:

"Now, my jolly hollyhocks, what are you going to do about it?"

"Yer is likely ter find out afore yer is ten minnits older," growled Lanky Lam. "You'll l'arn thet no galoot kin come ter Nutmeg an' run ther hull burg ter suit hisself. You kain't hold ther drop on us all night, an' soon's ye lose it, down ye goes."

"Let us reason the matter a little," Dick proposed. "I know this man to be innocent of the crime with which he is charged, and that is why I mean to see fair play in the matter."

"How d'yer know et?" demanded some one.

"That's ther idee!" exclaimed Lanky. "How do yer know et? Ef ye aire so mighty sartain on ther p'int, mebbly you had a hand in ther murder."

"I will tell you how I know it," said Dick. "As I was coming through the canyon I was stopped by a ghost, or something in that line. The specter warned me, or rather apprised me of what was going on here. Further, the ghostly personage declared most positively that Esmond Earle is innocent of the murder, and that Joe Gables fell by the hand of the Nemesis of Nutmeg. There you have the whole thing in a nut-shell, and now allow me to inquire once more—What are you going to do about it?"

He awaited an answer, still holding the crowd covered with his glittering five-shooters.

He held the best hand, by a grand majority.

CHAPTER IV.

APPLYING THE BALM.

No one in the crowd seemed willing to take upon himself the responsibility of offering a solution to the problem.

Dick waited some seconds, patiently, and finding that no one was going to take the necessary step, took it in hand himself to dispose of.

"Too many for you is it citizens?" he interrogated. "Well, I'll make a proposition to you. You don't seem to be near so eager for a hanging-bee as you were a little while ago, so suppose you adjourn, for the present, and give Mr. Earle the trial he has asked for, to-morrow."

Some few voices in the crowd assented to this, but the greater part grumbled in disapproval of the plan.

"And in the mean time," Dick went on, "we will allow Mr. Earle to go upon his own recognizance—"

"Not by er merry sight!" cried Lanky Lam. "We ain't goin' ter let him out o' our sight, an' that aire sot on, flat."

"Pardon me, sir," opposed Dick, "but I am running the mill at present. I say Mr. Earle is to be allowed his freedom, upon his promise that he will appear for trial. What say you, Mr. Earle?"

"I have no intention of going away," was the response. "I will appear for trial when I am wanted."

Good enough. You are at liberty for the present. There, there, citizens, don't howl sc, for it won't do you any good. When I take a matter of this sort in hand, I generally carry it out to suit my own ideas of the fitness of things. Now, one question further: Will you allow me and Mr. Earle to go peacefully to the hotel?"

"Nary a time we won't!" bellowed Mr. Lanky Lam. "We're goin' ter have our priz'ner, and that's what's ther matter wi' Hanner. You kin go on, ef yer wants ter, but not thet 'ar red-handed cuss. You hear me chirp!"

"Oh, yes, I hear your chirp," Dick assured. "And now," he added, "you just lend your attention to mine. Right about face, every one of you, and forward, march! I mean business, and I've got both fists full of bullets to back it up. Come, face around, every man, or I'll make it hot for you! There, that's it; now, amble right along, and not a peep out of any of you."

There were a hundred men in the crowd, at the very least.

But they had found their master in Deadwood Dick, the hero of a hundred deadly encounters, and they obeyed his order with more of humility than a flock of sheep could have manifested.

Forward they went, not one in the whole mob venturing to look around, and after them followed Deadwood Dick and the man he had rescued from so great a danger.

Dick had his weapons still in hand, and was narrowly watching the men, in order not to allow any one a chance to try a shot at him.

"You have done me a great service," spoke Esmond Earle, as he walked beside Dick's horse,

"and one that I shall never forget. You have saved my life, and though you are a stranger to me, I can assure you of my friendship."

"And friendship is a mighty good thing to have a supply of," responded Dick. "It is sometimes a scarce article, when a fellow is down in hard luck. I always accept all that is offered."

"Well, you have mine, for you have done me a big service. But, how are you going to escape this angry crowd? They will howl for your life, now, as well as mine."

"Oh, I consider them as good as disposed of now," was Dick's reply. "Their ardor has cooled considerably, and when we reach the hotel, I'll give them a treat. Ten to one that four-fifths of them will forget everything else the moment I mention it."

"Perhaps you are right. I hope you are, at any rate. By the way, you have the advantage of me, knowing my name."

"I am Golconda the Gorgeous, so called," Dick informed. "Further than that, I do not care to disclose my identity at present. Perhaps I will further enlighten you later on."

"Your appellation is certainly unique. Pardon my asking so bluntly. I will address you as Golconda, then, if agreeable."

"Certainly, that being my name."

Dick's eyes had not for a second left the crowd, and now he had occasion to give a new order.

"Hey, my fine fellows," he cried, "I see too many of you are inclined to get your hands on your weapons. In order to obviate the necessity of shooting any of you, just put up your hands, every one. There, that is better; and now keep them so till I tell you to lower them."

The mandate was obeyed promptly by every man, and in that manner the baffled disciples of Judge Lynch marched into the town they had so recently left like so many bloodthirsty and untamable tigers.

Like roaring lions they had gone forth; they were returning with the meekness of shorn lambs.

The hour was not far short of midnight, but the town was still awake.

In point of fact, it had been in an uproar since ten.

The street was thronged, and the hotel and saloon were ablaze with lights, as though the evening were yet young.

When the proposition had been first made to lynch Earle, it had met strong opposition from the better class of citizens. But the idea took hold upon the more disorderly element of the town's populace, and in the course of an hour, a howling mob was on the street.

The better class being greatly in the minority, nothing could be done, as none of them felt willing to risk their lives in the young stranger's behalf, and so he was left to his fate. And only for the timely coming of Deadwood Dick, it is plain to be seen what that fate would have been. But, now the tables were turned, and one man held the entire rabble in hand.

As they marched into town, hands up, a decided sensation was created, and every eye was eager to discern the ruling cause of so strange a spectacle.

That cause was speedily discovered, and the citizens of Nutmeg Bonanza looked upon the elegant horseman with awe and admiration.

"Who can he be?" was the question that fell from every lip.

No one could give the answer.

Dick had asked his companion to point out the hotel, when they should come to it, and when they came opposite to it the redoubtable Richard called a halt.

"Now, my fine fellows," he sung out, "we will have peace or war, just as you feel most inclined. If peace, then you are all cordially invited to step into the hotel and wet your whistles at my expense. What say you?"

There was immediately a sizable "howl" for peace.

It had dawned upon most of the men that they were in a decidedly awkward fix, and this easy and honorable way out of it touched them in just the right spot.

"We're fer peace every time ther clock strikes!" sung out one.

"Yas, and all ther way atween hours, too," another supplemented.

"You has won ther trick, Mister Sparkler," still another put in, "an' so we is ready ter come ter terms, an' them terms you mention is jest to our likin'."

"Yas! Yas! That's ther stuff!"

This last was the general cry, with slight variations, and the crowd made a move in the direction of the hotel.

"Very well, so be it," said Dick, and his revolvers disappeared.

Turning his horse, he rode it right into the bar-room of the hotel, and tossing some coins upon the bar, told the proprietor of the place to set out his wares to the thirsty multitude, *ad lib.*

This hotel was, as has been mentioned, the only one in the town.

It enjoyed the rather unique appellation of "The Bumblebee's Nest," and was in its humble way, quite a respectable place of its kind.

The proprietor's name was Hank Woolly, and he was about as thick as he was long, as it was said of him. He was fat, and there was just room enough behind his bar for him to move in.

"Jimminy!" he ejaculated, his favorite exclamation, as he looked in open-mouth amazement at the stranger.

"Didn't you catch what I said, Fatty?" Dick asked, smiling.

"Y—yes, I potted yer obserwation," mine host responded, "but yer 'pearance sort o' dazzled me. I'd be very proud ter know yer name, stranger."

"If you can give me shelter for myself and horse," said Dick, "I will append my name to your register."

"Wery well, I opine I kin do that. Here is ther wolume."

Saying this, the proprietor picked up the register of his establishment, which consisted of some common brown wrapping-paper sewed to form a book; and together with a pencil, handed it to his prospective guest.

"Et ain't very elaborate in style," he made apology, "but et aire ther best I hev ter offer."

"It is as good as the finest, so long as it answers the purpose," assured Dick.

Folding the book so as to hold it conveniently, Dick penciled his name on one of its pages and handed it back.

The name he had written was the same that he had previously given to Blossom Bob and Esmond Earle.

Meanwhile the crowd stood eagerly by, as eager, almost, to learn the name of the elegant stranger as they were to participate in the treat he had extended to them in so liberal a manner.

"What aire et, Hank?" was the demand from one.

"Give us ther name ov ther gallus grand dook, so's we kin drink ter his health," from another.

The landlord was deciphering what Dick had written, and as soon as he had made it clear to himself, he said, with a wave of the hand:

"Boyees, ther gentleman's name air Golconda ther Gorgeous, and his local address aire set down, ther world. Et looks like he has a broad citizenship, I should wenture to opine. But, now fer ther royal treat he has extended to ye, one an' all. Come right to the front, boyees, an' do jestic to ther occasion."

The "boyees" were already there, to a man, and Dick backed his horse away to let them have plenty of room.

"You are going to stop here, then?" queried Esmond Earle, who was still near him.

"Yes, for a time," Dick answered.

"Good enough. I will see you to-morrow, then. I will get out of sight, while these fellows are enjoying themselves, and will get hold of my weapons, if I can find them."

"That's a good idea. I guess the trouble is at an end, however, and I am glad that I happened upon the scene at so timely a moment."

Earle disappeared, and within half an hour Deadwood Dick had seen his horse properly stabled, and he himself was in bed.

The night rolled peacefully on, without further excitement.

CHAPTER V.

STUDYING A DISMAL SCORE.

NUTMEG BONANZA was a live town. It was about ten years old at the time of our story.

And it was growing, too; and that it had a history goes without saying.

The ruling spirits of the place were Stephen Barnthal and Samson Crapps. They were sole owners of the mine from which the town took its name, and owned pretty much the town besides.

A little more than ten years before, according to their tell, they had come into the gulch as prospectors, as poor as Job's turkey. But luck was with them, and they struck it rich immediately. They found a vein, out of which nuggets as big as nutmegs could be picked, and these nuggets being compared with that aro-

matic kernel, gave to the mine the peculiar name of Nutmeg Bonanza.

The two men mined enough by hand to buy machinery and give the place a boom, and from that time it had kept right on booming, and they were now classed among the nabobs of the Territory.

Other particulars concerning the town and its inhabitants will unfold themselves as our romance makes progress.

On the morning following the night of the events recorded, Deadwood Dick was up and out bright and early.

"Jimminy!" exclaimed Hank Woolly, when he entered the bar-room. "You is the greatest dazzler I ever did see."

Dick smiled in a pleasant way.

"Oh, you won't notice my peculiar rig, when once the strangeness wears off," he observed, carelessly.

"Yas, but et ain't likely ter wear off, I wenture to say," the worthy landlord further remarked.

Dick did present a dazzling appearance, truly.

He had laid aside his black riding-cloak, and his raiment could be seen entire.

His suit was made of rich bronze-color velvet. The buttons of the coat consisted of ten-dollar gold coins, and those of the vest of fives. Two bands of gold dollars, closely set, were on the sleeves of the coat, and a similar stripe was set on the outside seams of the trowsers.

On his spotless white silk tie was a magnificent diamond cluster, and the chain that hung across his vest sparkled with similar gems.

If armed, his weapons were not to be seen. But that was neither in question nor for a moment doubted.

"Yes, it will be an old thing to you by dinner-time. By the way, is Mr. Earle around yet?"

So Dick ended the matter, and disposed of it with a question.

The question caused mine host to laugh.

"No, he ain't around," he made answer, "an' what's more, he never will be, I wenture to opine."

"Why, what has happened?" Dick quickly asked, fearful for the the moment that the young man had been killed after all.

"Nothin' has happened that I knows on," said Hank, "but that young feller wasn't no fool, an' ef he ain't miles from hyar by this time I miss my reckonin'."

"Why, is he missing?" Dick inquired.

"I don't know, but I'm willin' ter bet he is."

Dick was now reassured, and smiled at the landlord's earnest manner.

"And I am ready to bet just the other way," he declared. "I saw a sample of the fellow's courage last night, and if you think he has run away you are mistaken. He is not made of that sort of stuff, and— Hal! what did I tell you?"

The door had opened, and Esmond Earle stepped into the room.

"Good-morning," he greeted pleasantly.

"Good-morning," Dick responded. "Glad to see you. Our landlord here was just offering to bet you had shaken the dust of Nutmeg off your boots and struck out for a more congenial clime."

The young man laughed lightly.

"Which proves that Mr. Woolly hasn't become acquainted with me yet," he remarked.

"That is about what I told him," responded Dick. "I formed my opinion of your caliber last night."

The two passed out upon the piazza, the landlord making some retractory remark as they left the room, and entered into conversation.

"Do you object to my asking a question or two, Mr. Golconda?" Earle inquired, when out of ear-shot of their host.

"Of course not," was the assurance. "Ask as many as you want to. I'll do the best I can toward answering."

"I would return to that matter of last night."

"All right, go ahead."

"You told the crazy crowd that you were stopped in the canyon by a ghost?"

"Exactly."

"Were you bluffing then? Or was it a fact?"

"It was a fact, straight and solid. It was just as I stated it."

"How near were you to this ghost?"

"Within twenty feet."

"What is your opinion about it?"

"How do you mean?"

"Well, do you think it was ghost or mortal?"

"Why, it was flesh and blood; of course. I take no stock in any other sort of ghosts."

"You did not see the person's face, of course."

"No, but I did see one hand."

"Which one was it?"

"The right."

"I wish it had been the left."

"Why so?"

"You might have seen a ring on it."

"You have a suspicion, then, who the ghost is."

"I don't know whether I have or not."

"You must have, to speak as you do."

"What I mean is, my suspicion is so slight that I dare not own it."

"That is different. I suppose it is no use asking you where your suspicion rests, eh?"

"I prefer not to say. Now, one thing more: Did the ghost speak of himself as the Nemesis of Nutmeg? Or was the Nemesis spoken of as being yet another person?"

Dick quickly noted that Earle had applied "himself" to the ghost. Was it intentional? Did he think the person was of the male persuasion?

"If you think this ghost is a man," he observed, "you are mistaken."

"Then it was a woman?"

"Assuredly."

"Well, I did not know. But, no matter. What about the point I asked concerning?"

"I must think. But, yes, of course; she admitted that she was the one who had killed Gables and Blossom Bob, and—"

"What! You don't mean to say Blossom Bob has been killed?"

"Such is the fact of the case."

"Where is this going to end? Why, Bob was something of a terror around here, ranking second to none, save perhaps Lanky Lam. It is a small loss to the place, however. But when did he get his send-off?"

Dick went ahead then and told his adventure at length.

While they were talking the town was gradually becoming alive, and ere long a goodly number of persons were on the street.

Every one who passed the hotel had to stop and survey the glittering stranger, but to this Dick did not give the slightest heed or attention.

Presently, however, a murmur of excitement arose that drew the attention of both Dick and his companion, and they saw a crowd beginning to collect in front of the post-office, which was on the other side of the street, further down.

"What's the excitement now?" questioned Earle.

"I am just curious enough to go over and see," answered Dick.

So they left the piazza of the hotel and went over and joined in the crowd.

The crowd was gazing at the door of the office, and looking where the others looked, Dick and Earle saw this notice:

"CITIZENS OF NUTMEG.

"You are hereby warned not to molest Esmond Earle again. He is innocent of the crime of which you accuse him. Harm him at your peril. If you do, the name of every one who had a hand in the work will be added to my list of victims. Be warned."

"XXXXXXXXXXXXX.

"Six more!

"Beware."

"THE NEMESIS OF NUTMEG."

"That smacks of business," remarked Deadwood Dick, grimly.

"I should say it does," agreed Earle.

And everybody else was of about the same opinion.

Said one man:

"You kin count me out, every time. I'm not buckin' against no ghost, not ef I know what I'm doin'."

"Jest ther same here," echoed several others.

"What mean the seven crosses and six straight marks?" inquired Dick.

"That is the score of victims," explained Earle. "I am told that it began with thirteen."

"I see. And there are six more to check off."

"Exactly. It is a grim business."

"I should say it was."

"Thet aire is what et be, an' nothin' short of et," a man in the crowd chipped in. "When Growlin' Hank got his ticket-o'-leave, about a year ago, 'most, a paper was found pinned on him with one cross an' twelve straight marks."

"Was there any such paper put on Gables, when he got his call the other night?" inquired Dick.

"Not then there wasn't," was the ready response, "but when we kem to plant him next mornin' there was."

"An' his check-off made ther score stand six dead seven ter come."

"Great monnymint o' patience!" cried Lanky Lam, who had just joined the crowd. "Who's ther seventh, then? This score stands seven ter six!"

"So et do!" was the exclamation from all. No one had noticed particularly, that the odd and even had changed places on the familiar record.

"And ther question is, who's the seventh?" Mr. Cobbletree shouted.

"It is the late Blossom Bob," informed a long, seedy-looking individual in a seedy suit of black. "I have just come through the canyon, and he is lying cold and stiff at Gospel Corner."

Lanky Lam jumped two feet high, and uttered a yell that might have been heard a mile.

CHAPTER VI.

VICTIM NUMBER EIGHT.

THE new arrival upon the scene was an actor. That is to say, such he had been, once upon a time.

Maximilian MacDuff was the rather high-sounding name he answered to.

He had belonged to a traveling company that stranded and went to pieces in Arizona, and he had never had ambition enough to get away.

Micawber-like, he was living on hope, waiting for something to turn up. Sooner or later, he told himself and curious inquirers, another company of some sort would come along, when he would have no trouble about catching on, as soon as he made known his superior talents.

"Yer don't say Bob aire dead, do yer?" Lanky Lam demanded, as soon as he came down after his jump.

"By me halidom," MacDuff assured, tragically, "but he is as dead as the bones of Caesar. He couldn't be deader."

"Somebody shell pay fer this!" Lanky howled. "Blossom was my pard, he was, and his death shall be avenged. This hyar Nemmysus wants ter keep clear o' my guns, now, fer, by ther shades, I'll bore him at sight."

Just at this juncture Maximilian MacDuff caught sight of Deadwood Dick.

"Ha!" he cried, striking an attitude, "what is this I behold? Do these visual organs once more look upon a member of the profesh?"

"I hardly think they do," said Dick. "I am sure they do not," he added, "if you expect to find in me a fraternal spirit. I take it you have been a player in your better days. There is something stagey about you."

"Ho!" with a look of pride around, "see how blood and training will tell! See how readily my inborn talents are discovered by a critical eye. Sir, you do me proud. I am Maximilian MacDuff, Shakespearean tragedian."

"Where are you playing?" Dick asked, with a merry sparkle in his eyes.

"Alas!" was the mournful sigh, "I am at present under the heel of adverse fortune, but I expect to catch on as soon as something comes along. I had fond hopes that I saw in you the moneyed head of some successful company."

"Such is not the case, however," Dick assured.

"And more's the pity, alas!"

In the meantime Lanky Lam was howling about the sudden taking off of his late partner in evil deeds.

"Yas, yas," he vowed, "ther Nemmysus wants ter keep clear o' me, fer by ther great monnymint o' Patience, I'm on ther war-path now! Say, you flash an' fresh rooster, you!" turning suddenly upon Dick, "mebby et's you thet's at ther bottom of et all. You was about ther last one through ther canyon last night."

"You don't know whether I was or not," said Dick, coolly. "I had nothing to do with the fellow's death, however."

"That is only your say-so, which don't make it so, not by a batful et don't! I ruther s'pect thet you and this other cuss knows more about it than any one else. Ther pair of ye seemed ter understand each other pooty well last night."

"If you think so," Dick retorted, "you want to keep the suspicion to yourself, or else show up your proof. Bear that in mind."

"An' ef I don't, what then? Come, now, pooty boy, what will be ther consekence ef I don't do nuther?"

"You may find out, and that in a hurry."

The bullwhacker laid back his head and haw-hawed.

"You is talkin' to yer uncle, me boyee, you is," he warned, "so be jest a leetle keerful what yer say. You had ther bulge on ther crowd last night, with yer weepins, but thet ain't ther case now, an' yer wants ter look out."

"I am looking out, all the time," Dick assured. "You heard what I said, and if you mind it there will be no trouble."

"Great monnymint o' Patience! Be you talkin' ter me like that? Why, I'll turn ye up and spank ye, ther fu'st yer knows. I sed mebby

you had a hand in ther work, an' mebby ye did, too. Mebby you is the Nemmysus. Hey, fellers, ain't ther jest a degree o' s'picion thet mebby he aire?"

There came some faint echoes in the affirmative, but they were on the outer circle of the crowd.

Dick reached out with his left arm and gave Mr. Cobbletree a gentle tap on the proboscis.

There was a roar then, and everybody got out of the way to clear room for action.

Lanky Lam sprung up three feet if an inch, came down all spread-eagle style, and was ready for active work. Forward he rushed, drawing back his right arm as he came, and then he shot out a blow that was terrific.

But it was harmless.

Dick merely sent out his left, straight from the shoulder, with a quick, spring-like flip, and Lanky went down all in a heap.

The crowd gave a whoop of delight, at this sudden display of prowess on the part of the gorgeous stranger, which only served to enrage Mr. Lanky the more. He scrambled up with a roar like that of a tiger.

"Your life er mine, now, cuss yer!" he screamed. "No man ever done that ter me afore, and no man kin do it and live, nuther. I'll break yer in two, by ther great monnymint o' Patience I will!"

"We'll see about that," remarked Dick, smiling in cool contempt. "Such a turn as this will sharpen my appetite for breakfast. Come on, my fire-eater, and let the fun begin."

No need to extend the invitation, for Lanky was coming.

He was coming with a full head of steam on, too, and probably counted upon having it all his own way.

As he came, too, his hand fell upon a weapon, and he evidently meant all he had said. It would be his life or Dick's, if it went according to his programme. But, it didn't go that way.

Dick stood perfectly still till the bullwhacker was right upon him, when, with a lightning step to one side, he was out of reach, and then he struck the fellow a blow on the jaw that sent him sliding off on his ear clear out to the middle of the street, where he lay motionless.

"Anybody else want some?" Dick inquired, with a lazy air.

Nobody else did.

Said one man:

"Ef thet aire ar' a sample, I don't know what a hull pattern off ther piece must be."

"The noblest Roman of them all!" cried Maximilian MacDuff.

"You are a terror, certainly," said Esmond Earle. "You will have a man after your life now, though, in Lanky Lam."

"That was nothing," Dick modestly observed. "Any one could lay out such a fellow as that. But, come, let's to breakfast. There goes the bell, I guess. I like to be around at meal-time."

"Yes, that is the bell. I am ready to attend to that duty, as usual."

The two walked away, leaving the crowd to comment at pleasure. Dick looked back at Lanky once or twice, to see that he did not come to and try a shot at him, but the gentleman was perfectly still.

"Never saw I the like," observed Maximilian MacDuff. "Never saw I so clean a knock-out before."

"Et strikes me thet mebby he's knocked out fer good," one man observed.

This set some of Lanky's friends to work to find out, and some half dozen of them picked the fallen hero up and carried him to the porch of the post-office.

But Lanky was not dead, and when the proper means had been applied he soon showed signs of life.

Presently he was able to sit up, when he demanded:

"Whar is he? Whar is ther p'izin sarprint? All I ax now is ther chance ter git a bead on him."

"He has gone to appease the cravings of his inner man," informed Mr. MacDuff.

"He'll be gone funder'n thet, ef I kin git a shot at him," the angry rascal declared. "He'll cross Jordan wi' bells on, an' I'm a-tellin' ye he will. No fancy galoot kin do what he's done, and live."

By this time he had regained his feet, and proceeded to examine his weapons.

He was allowed plenty of room. He was well known as a desperate character, and no one there wanted to cross him in any way.

In about two minutes' time he had come to himself wholly, and with revolvers in hand, then, he started across toward the hotel. Murder shone in his eyes, and he clearly meant to

kill the man who had punished him so cleverly.

The crowd stood spellbound. There were plenty, now, who would have gladly set up a warning cry, but no one dared take the initiative.

Forward the enraged bullwhacker went, muttering and cursing to himself, until he had got about half-way across the street.

Then it was that a surprising thing happened. He threw up his hands, reeled forward a few paces, and then fell upon his face.

"Ther Nemmysus! Ther Nemmysus!"

Such was the cry that was immediately raised.

The crowd made a sudden rush forward, but stopped again as suddenly.

One thought had come to one and all at the same moment. Would not another victim be found among them?

There was an awkward pause, and a solemn hush fell over the scene, broken only by the running fire of comment and question, in a low hum.

When a minute or two had passed, however, and nothing further happened, then some one made another start, and the crowd soon surged around the fallen man.

He was found to be dead, shot right through the heart.

Not a sound of a pistol had been heard, but here was the deadly work of a bullet only too plainly manifest.

Lambert Cobbletree, or "Lanky Lam," probably the chief of the "bad" men of the gulch, was laid low.

About ten minutes after the fatal shot, a rather fine-appearing man about forty-five years came along.

He was well dressed, and had about him an air of self-importance.

This man was Stephen Barnthal, whose name has been mentioned.

The body of Cobbletree had now been carried and laid on a corner of the hotel piazza.

"What is the excitement here?" Barnthal inquired, stopping.

"Another victim of the Nemesis, sir," answered MacDuff.

"And who this time?"

"Lanky Lam."

The rich mine-owner's face paled for a moment, and he seemed to breathe hard.

"I will give ten thousand dollars," he presently spoke, "to the man who will bring the career of this wholesale murderer to a close. No man's life is safe for a minute. This terrible reign of terror must end!"

CHAPTER VII.

DETECTIVE DICK'S DEDUCTIONS.

DEADWOOD DICK was at breakfast.

He and Esmond Earle had gone straight to the breakfast-room.

And as that room was well back in the rear, they knew nothing, for a time, of what had taken place.

"So, you think it won't be healthy for me here, eh?" Dick observed, as they took their places at the table together.

"No," responded Earle, "for Lanky Lam is a desperate fellow, and he'll be likely to shoot you at sight. You will have to look out sharp, all the time."

"He will have to be quick on the draw, if he gives me any warning at all, for I can say without boasting that I am handy with the tools," Richard of Deadwood remarked. "Besides, I have had desperate men after me before."

"Well, we are two against one, anyhow," Earle declared, "for you can count on me if my help is needed. Two pairs of eyes ought to afford some protection against surprise, I should imagine."

"Thank you. Yes, two of us ought to be able to keep him off. By the way, have you been here long?"

"Only a few weeks. I came pretty near making a permanent stay of it, though."

Dick laughed at that.

"You certainly did," he agreed.

Others entered the room while they were talking.

Among them was an Irishman named Fingal McFaddin, who was bookkeeper at the Nutmeg Bonanza Mine.

He was a smart, bright fellow of thirty or so, a true son of the Emerald Isle, yet with only a slight touch of the brogue on his tongue.

"Top of the morning to you, Mr. Earle!" he greeted. "I hear it's a divil of a bad fix you came near getting into last night."

"You heard aright," Earle responded, when he had answered the greeting. "Didn't you

hear the uproar in the street about midnight, when the jubilee was in progress?"

"Never a sound, sir. It takes a sizable noise to awaken Fingal McFaddin, when once he has dropped off into the sweet sleep of innocence and virtue, which only the good can experience."

"You must be a paragon of goodness, then, sir," observed Deadwood Dick, "if it is to be measured by your sound sleeping. There was noise enough here to raise the dead, almost, when I struck the town."

"And you are the gentleman who helped Mr. Earle out of his fix, I believe," the jolly Irishman remarked.

"Well, I chipped in, it is true."

"He saved my life," declared Earle, warmly. "Mr. Golconda, this is Fingal McFaddin, book-keeper at the Nutmeg Mine. As good a fellow as you want to meet, too, by the way. As you were asking me something about the mine, thought I'd introduce you. He can tell you anything and everything you want to know."

"Glad to know you," Dick exclaimed. "My name is Golconda, as you have just heard. I intend calling at the office of the mine this morning."

"If I can be of any service to you, sir, you have only to command," Fingal offered.

"Thank you. What time can I catch the proprietors in?"

"They are never later than ten, sir; and usually around by nine."

"Good enough. I may drop in a little earlier and have a chat with you, if you don't care."

"Come and welcome, sir. You'll find that Fingal McFaddin can keep his end up at a game of talk."

"I haven't any doubt about that, sir."

Up to this time there had been no ladies at the table. Now two entered the room.

One was a woman of forty or so, the wife of one of the men present.

The other was not more than twenty-two, evidently, and was handsome. She had dark hair and eyes, and her face was pensive and sweet.

She gave Esmond Earle a smile of recognition as she went to her place, saying good-morning, and he responded suitably. After that the talk became general, until it was interrupted by the sudden entrance of the landlord.

He waddled into the room, looking like a football on legs, and the expression of his face told that something of importance had happened.

"What is it now, landlord?" asked Fingal McFaddin.

"Lanky Lam has been killed," he announced.

"Is it possible you hit him so hard?" and Earle turned quickly to Deadwood Dick as he put the question.

The same thought had come to Dick.

"I gave him a pretty good thump," he owned, "but it was not on a dangerous spot. If I killed him he was a tender chicken, that's all."

"No, no, et wasn't you," the landlord informed. "He didn't lay very long where you left him. Et was ther Nemmysus that done et fer him."

"What?"

The exclamation from nearly all present.

"Et war ther Nemmysus," the landlord repeated. "He war comin' this way, ther boys say, with his weepins in hand and blood in his eye, lookin' fer you, Mr. Golconder, when down he went, all in a heap."

"Where did the shot come from?" asked Golconda.

"Nobody knows," mine host answered.

"Was no report heard?"

"Nary."

"Then it was the spook, sure enough. Well, one thing is proven to the people of this town, anyhow."

"What is that?" asked Earle.

"That neither you nor I fired the fatal shot, is certain; and hence neither of us can be the Nemesis, as the unfortunate man intimated."

"You are right. But, I guess that was not seriously considered as likely. At any rate, it don't matter now."

"Where is the body, landlord?"

"Out on the porch."

"We will take a look at it after we get through," Dick observed.

As soon as they had finished the meal, Dick and Earle left the room and went out upon the piazza, where the crowd was still great.

Deadwood Dick pushed his way to the front, and stooped over the body of the unfortunate man, for as such he was considered, bad as he had been alive.

Plenty of room was made for the handsome stranger, for his appearance was such as to give

him a more than usually superior bearing, and it was recognized and tacitly admitted by all.

Others had previously examined the wound, so the dead man's breast was exposed to view.

Dick's examination was hasty but thorough. As soon as it was done, he rose and stepped away, and he and Earle walked off around the corner.

"What do you think about it?" Earle asked.

"It is a great mystery, sure enough, and one that I would enjoy straightening out," was Dick's reply.

"Well, why don't you try it? I heard it said in the crowd that ten thousand dollars is offered by Barnthal."

"Yes, I heard that, and it strikes me that he is interested in it. Perhaps he has some particular friend that he wants to protect."

"You may be right. But, what is your idea about it all?"

"I haven't formed any fixed idea about it."

"But you examined the wound."

"That is a bullet-hole, plain enough. The Nemesis, too, is not far away."

"That follows, of course. Maybe the fellow is right in the crowd, for all we can tell."

"I think not. In the first place, if the ghost spoke the truth it is not a man, but a woman. There is no woman in the crowd."

"You are right. They are not over-plenty in the town. But, the ghost may have lied to you, with a purpose. If that is so, then we don't know much about it after all."

"True enough. We may learn more before we are much older, however."

So they talked on, as they sauntered down the street.

"Oh, by the way," Dick suddenly asked, after a while, "who is that pretty girl who was at the table?"

"Ha! she impressed you, did she?"

"I admit it," Dick owned.

"Well, her name is Edma Rulford, and that is about all I know about her, except that she is as pretty a girl as I ever saw."

"Does she belong here?"

"She has been at the hotel about a year, I believe."

"About the same length of time the Nemesis has been at work, that."

Earle gave a start.

"You don't mean to say you suspect her?" he exclaimed.

"I am ready to suspect anybody and everybody," was Dick's response.

"But what gives you the idea that she can have any hand in the matter, sir?"

"Well, one thing, the length of time she has been here. That is one item. To that add the fact that the shot came from the direction of the hotel, and from above the street level considerably. Then—"

"How in the deuce do you know all this?" Esmond Earle asked, amazed.

The expert detective smiled.

"It is as plain as though the shot had been heard and seen," he asserted. "The fellow was coming toward the hotel from the direction of the post-office. The bullet hit him in the breast. Not only that, but it came from a height, as its course was downward."

"By heavens!" Earle had to exclaim. "You must be a detective!"

"Oh, any observing man could note that," Dick passed off.

"I don't know about that. Not another man in the crowd thought of it, I'll bet high."

"It is so plain that perhaps no one has thought it worth mentioning."

"Well, is there any further reason why you should connect Miss Rulford's name with the affair?"

"Let us see. She was not in the dining-room when the shooting took place. We do not know where she was. Then, she wears a very handsome ring on her left hand."

"And what in the name of kingdom has that got to do with it?"

"I am going back to a remark of your own. When I told you that I had seen the right hand of the ghost, you said you wished it had been the left, for then I might possibly have seen a ring on it. Esmond Earle, you, too, suspect this pretty young woman of being the Nemesis of Nutmeg Bonanza. Upon what is your suspicion founded?"

Esmond Earle looked upon Golconda the gorgeous as though he believed him supernaturally gifted, almost.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXCHANGE OF CONFIDENCE.

It was a moment before Earle responded.

"There is no use trying to deceive you."

"And yet I have been fooled many a time, and expect to be fooled many times more," was Dick's return.

"I will tell you all there is about the matter. I saw this ghost once, when it appeared to warn its fifth victim, about the time I came here, and it struck me, later, that the voice was familiar."

"What could you tell about the voice, if only one word was uttered?" Deadwood Dick quickly asked.

"I have not said that only one word was spoken," was the quick return.

"True enough. I was judging by the warning that was given to Blossom Bob. Only the one word 'doomed' was spoken to him."

"I heard more," said Earle. "But, I will tell you all about it. I was out at the head of the canyon one evening, smoking and strolling around idly. Presently I sat down on a bowlder, enjoying my cigar and communing with my thoughts. I was just off the trail a little, out of the way of any one who might come along. It was, by the way, the very first evening I spent here. I had not seen Miss Rulford yet. You see the object of my impressing this, do you not?"

"I think I do," Dick answered. "You want to show that you had not heard Miss Rulford's voice first."

"Exactly. I had no thought, then, of comparing the voice of the ghost with any other that I had ever heard."

"What did the ghost say on that occasion?"

"Hard-up Gil was the victim, and it was just light enough to see when he came along. He was about stepping into the canyon, when the ghost appeared in front of him with raised arm and ordered him to halt. I tell you it gave me a start, for it was so unexpected, and I had never heard anything of the matter then. Well, Gil came to as sudden a stop as you ever saw, frightened almost to death, and the ghost said:

"'Another murderer of the innocent is called.

Hearken to your sentence: You are doomed!'"

"Gilbert must have felt 'hard-up' then, truly," laughed Dick.

"He trembled like a man with a chill," Earle went on. "The ghost glided away as soon as it had spoken, and disappeared in the canyon, and as soon as it was gone, Gil wheeled and stretched his legs toward town at his best speed, and he didn't stop once on the way, either."

"And what was the result of it all?"

"Just what you have seen yourself. Next morning he was found dead in the middle of the street, with the 'mysterious score' pinned to his breast."

"And now comes the connection of this with your suspicion against the young lady at the hotel."

"That is in order. Next day I saw Miss Rulford, and heard her talk, and with the first words I heard her speak came the thought that her voice and that of the ghost sounded strangely alike."

"A good point, certainly. Have you any others to back it up?"

"Not another one. I do know, however, that she is absent from the hotel many hours together, at times, when no one seems to know where she is."

"Ever made inquiries about the matter?"

"Only by passing remark."

"And found out nothing?"

"Nothing at all."

"Are you on friendly terms with her?"

"Oh, yes, but there is a reserve about her that checks inquiry."

"I have a suspicion," Dick announced, suddenly and boldly.

"And what is that?"

"That you love her."

Earle stopped short, and after a moment of silence, during which he looked the unknown detective squarely in the eye, said:

"Golconda, let us drop in here and have a solid talk. I owe my life to you, and I will trust you with other matters. I am playing detective here, but I am only a boy at the business. You seem to be an expert."

"Just as you please," answered Dick. "Don't think that I want to pry into your personal affairs, however, just from what I said in half joke."

"It is no joke with me. You hit the truth square. I love that woman, with heart, mind and soul. But, let us go in here, as I mentioned."

Dick had already taken a survey of the place, and found it to be a rather decent-looking combination of saloon, eating-house and gaming-hall.

"Very well, we will go in," he agreed.

They entered, and found comfortable seats at a table in an out-of-the-way corner.

"Now," said Earle, "I will give you my story. My name you know, and it is my true name. I am in search of a lost sister. If living, she is about twenty-five years of age now, but I have no hope that she is living. The last I heard of her she was at St. Louis, with intentions of going further west in a short time. And that was five years ago. But I am running ahead too fast. You will want the particulars."

"Yes, while you are about it you may as well give it to me in straight order," Dick agreed.

"I will do so. Six years ago the misguided girl eloped from a boarding-school with a young man whose acquaintance she had made, and nothing was heard from her for a year. Then, as I said, I heard from her at St. Louis. She and I were alone in the world, and owing to a foolish quarrel, were not on good terms at the time of her elopement, and hence her silence. When she wrote, finally, she told me she was married, and that her husband's name was Paul Lynton. She did not state his business. She said they were about starting further West, and would probably go to California or Mexico. She would write again, she promised, but I have never heard a word from her since."

"And what drew you to it that brings you here?" Dick asked.

"When some months had passed, and I heard no more from her, I went to St. Louis, and there began my search. I went to every hotel in the city, almost, hunting for some trace of them, and at last I found the one where they had been living. Then I began to inquire about Lynton, and soon satisfied myself that he was a professional gambler. By rare good luck I got on their track, and followed them to Texas. From there I followed them to Mexico, but failed to find them there. I lost track of them, and it is only within a few months that I have heard again of Lynton. He was at Prescott, then, and alone. I am hunting for him now, but with little hope of finding him."

"Yes, for if he has learned that you are upon his track, he is no doubt sailing under an assumed name. But, have you reason to believe that he is here, the cause of your remaining?"

"No. It is the face of Edma Rulford that holds me here."

"Ha! I see. It is love that now rules."

"I admit that it is."

"And you know little or nothing about her?"

"Little or nothing. There is a reserve about her, as I said, that I cannot overcome. I do cherish a hope, however, that she cares for me." Esmond Earle was speaking in a frank, manly way, as to a nearest friend.

"Why don't you put the matter to the test, and know your fate?" Dick asked.

"You ought to see," was the response.

"Her reserve of manner could be overcome, if you made the effort."

"It is not altogether that. It is the question as to whether she is the Nemesis. If so, the dream must end."

"You are in a sort of delicate dilemma, I can see," Dick observed. "What you are after is to learn the truth concerning her."

"That is it. I told you that I am trying to play detective here. And so I am. First, I want to find trace of that fellow, Paul Lynton; but mainly, now, I want to find out the truth concerning Edma Rulford."

"I can understand and appreciate the state of mind you are in."

"But, what is more important, can you help me?"

"Perhaps I may be able to do so."

"Promise me that you will."

"Well, I promise."

"Enough."

"Have we anything further to discuss at present?" Dick asked.

"There is nothing further I can tell you," answered Earle. "There is nothing more to be told. You know all about me and my business here."

"A reminder that I have not given you much of an introduction to myself," Dick remarked. "You must pardon me, Earle, but I have a role to play here that makes it very necessary for me to keep my identity unknown."

"My words were not intended as such a reminder, Golconda. I am not seeking to know any more than you have already told me. Enough that I owe my life to you and that I regard you as a friend."

"Pshaw!" Dick exclaimed, "I will take you into my confidence. I had no intention of making myself known to a soul here, but circum-

stances have thrown us together, and since you have made a confidant of me I will—"

"No, I do not ask it," Earle interrupted. "Say no more. Let us go back to the hotel and see if any new excitement prevails."

"You shall know who and what I am, first," said Dick.

"Wait, at any rate, till your work here is done, or business accomplished, or whatever it is, that has brought you here, incognito, has been carried out, and then you will be free—"

"Yes, and that will be a poor time to show confidence in you. I will tell you now, but pledging you to secrecy."

"On my word of honor you may trust me."

"My name is Richard Bristol."

"Bristol? That name sounds familiar."

"I am better known as Deadwood Dick."

"What!" Earle exclaimed. "Not the famous Deadwood Dick, the detective?"

"They were talking in low tones, so that no one could possibly overhear their words."

The redoubtable Richard smiled.

"I don't lay any claim to being famous," he remarked, modestly, "but I am Deadwood Dick. Mind that you do not let the secret out."

"Trust me for that. I was sure that you must be a detective, from the way you talked and reasoned. I am glad to know you, Mr. Bristol, and hope that our friendship may be lasting."

"I hope so," Dick responded. "Of my business here I will say nothing now. You will know that in good time. Let's be going."

"All right, Mr. Golconda," in a slightly louder tone.

They went out of the place, and retraced their steps to the hotel.

On arriving there, they found that a new excitement prevailed. On the breast of the dead man had been found a slip of paper, bearing the following terribly significant score:

"XXXXXXXXXXIIIIII."

CHAPTER IX.

DICK AT THE MINE.

"How came this here?"

So demanded Deadwood Dick.

"Et war thar wi'out comin'," one man averred.

"Nonsense!" cried Dick. "Somebody put it there, that is certain."

"Like the ghost in Hamlet," offered Maximilian MacDuff, "it simply appeared; but whence it came no mortal knows."

"Did no one see it put there?" Dick demanded.

"Do you mean to say it was put there while you all stood around, and no one saw it laid there?"

"Thet aire ar' about ther size of et," the first speaker affirmed. The fust we knowed about et, thar et war. I tell the boyees thet the Nemmysus aire a sure-nuff ghost, an' no mistook."

"How long since it was discovered?"

"Not more'n a minute or two, at ther most."

Deadwood Dick and Esmond Earle exchanged a glance, and together they walked off out of the crowd.

The eyes of the crowd followed them, and many comments were made concerning them both, and especially concerning the magnificent stranger.

Said one man:

"Them fellers has cottoned pooty quick, fer strangers, an' thet aire ar' frozen fact from top ter bottom."

"Right you aire," another agreed. "Ef Golconda ther Gorgy an' Esmond Earle ain't met afore, then I miss my guess."

"Mebby poor Lanky Lam wasn't so fur off ther truth, after all," hinted yet another. "Mebby ther two fellers is in cahoots, an' thet Earle is ther Nemmysus, after all said an' done."

"Ef thet aire ar' ther case, it's a pity he wasn't stringed up last night, as the boyees started ter do."

"You never said nuthin' straighter nor that, an' I'm sayin' so, hard as ever I kin say it."

So the fire of comment ran, but Dick and his companion were entirely ignorant of it all.

"What do you think of it now?" Earle asked, as the two walked off.

"It puzzles me to know what to think of it," was Dick's reply. "Somebody put that paper there."

"Why, of course. But the question is, Who was that somebody?"

"There you've got me. No doubt he was in the crowd."

"It is very likely, and if so—"

"If so," Dick finished, "then the Nemesis is not Miss Rulford, unless she has a helper in the work."

"And I honestly hope it is not she. I hate to think of her as doing such work. Her hands are too small and shapely to have the stain of blood on them."

"From what you heard her say to the fellow you heard the ghost warn, that is, what you heard the ghost say, it would seem that the cause is a just one, and the vendetta only a just retribution."

"But it is not she, I cannot, will not, believe it! She is too young and fair to be engaged at such awful business."

"Well, I hope you are right, but it is certainly some one."

"There is no doubting that."

Suddenly Deadwood Dick stopped short.

"I am forgetting my own business," he remarked, glancing at his handsome watch. "It is after nine, and I must call at the office of the mine. Will you direct me to it, if you know where it is?"

"Everybody knows where it is. Go around the corner by the post-office, and follow on till you come to it."

"Good enough; and now if you will excuse me, I'll go around there."

"I'll do that, certainly. Sorry I've detained you as I have."

"You did nothing of the sort. Well, look out for yourself till we meet again, which will be soon, if you remain around."

They parted, and Dick crossed the street and headed toward the post-office.

"This is a queer business," he mused, as he went along. "I don't know what to make of it all. But, perhaps it will be sifted out soon. I must try to make the acquaintance of Miss Rulford, and see if there is anything in her voice or manner to make me think as Earle did."

In that strain his thoughts went, and he turned the corner by the post-office, and set off down that street.

But it could not be called by so dignified a name, for there were only three or four buildings on it, and in a little distance it merged into a path that led up the side of the gulch to the rocky ledge.

The end of the path was at the mine, and the buildings were in plain sight as soon as the corner was turned.

Dick went up, and in a little time was at the door of the office.

He opened it and went in.

Fingal McFaddin was there alone, perched upon a high stool at a desk behind the outer railing.

"Well, I see you are here," Dick observed.

"I am that same," was the hearty response. "Come right in and find a seat, sir. The bosses are not around yet, though Mr. Barnthal was here quite early."

"It is all the same," Dick returned. "I will wait till they come. I suppose this mine is pretty rich, is it not?"

He helped himself to a chair as he put the question.

"You are shouting the truth when you say that," Fingal assured. "Royally rich it is, and if I owned one-fifth of it, never another bit of work would I do."

"Do you think the owners would sell an interest in it?"

"I don't believe they would."

"Have they ever had an offer?"

"Not that I know of."

"I understand they own pretty much the whole place."

"And so they do. It was a lucky find for them. Wish I could strike it as rich. But, that is the way of the world."

"Yes, the favors of Dame Fortune are not evenly bestowed. By the way, I suppose I can ask you a few questions without your repeating the matter."

"You can, sir. Show me the man that has got a tighter mouth than Fingal McFaddin, and I'll show you one that can't open his mouth at all."

"Good enough. Well, did you ever hear mention here of such names as Temple and Noland?"

"Temple and Noland, is it? I don't believe I ever did."

"Never heard Barnthal or Crapps speak of them, eh?"

"I don't remember ever hearing the names before."

"Very well, you needn't say anything about it."

"Never a word will I say, sir."

"All right. Now, what sort of men are Barnthal and Crapps?"

"Gentlemen, both of them," was the prompt response.

"It is to your interest to say so, of course," remarked Dick.

The bookkeeper smiled.

"Fingal McFaddin would say nothing else, sir, even if they were rascals of the worst stamp."

"Well, that is right, and I don't blame you for speaking well of them, no matter whether you believe what you say or not."

"Yes, gentlemen they are, and none finer."

"I believe they own that big new hall that is about finished."

"Yes, they put it up."

"What is it to be used for?"

"They expect to open a handsome saloon and gambling parlor."

"Do you imagine they would sell it out to a stranger, for instance myself?"

"They might, if you bid high enough."

"I believe I will try them."

"You think of staying here, then?"

"Oh! there's nothing certain about that. I may pick up and drift out again in less than a week. Nothing keeps me when I make up my mind that I want a change. Have you any idea what that building has cost?"

"Not a penny less than ten thousand dollars, I should say."

"That is about what I guessed."

The building in question was a fine one for such a place. It was in the center of the town, only a little distance from the "Bumblebee's Nest," and was several degrees finer than any other the place could boast.

It had been built with the object in view expressed by McFaddin.

Not satisfied with the income of the mine, and the rents of their numerous buildings in the town, the mine-owners wanted to get the lion's share of the money spent nightly for drink and at the gaming-tables.

And this they were likely to do, as soon as their place opened for business. It was ready now, but was waiting for the furniture and fixings that had been ordered, and were on the way.

While Deadwood Dick and the bookkeeper were talking, Mr. Stephen Barnthal came into the office.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said McFaddin, and he turned to his work.

"You want to see me?" Barnthal asked, with a good deal of pompousness in his manner.

"You are Mr. Barnthal?" queried Dick, without taking the trouble to rise.

"That's my name, sir," the mine-owner assured.

"Then I do want to see you," said Dick. "I want to buy an interest in your mine here, if I can."

"You can't do it," declared Barnthal, flatly.

"Yes I can, too, if you will sell," assured Dick.

"But we won't sell. Besides, you are not likely to have enough money to put up, singly, if we were inclined to sell."

"You don't know anything about that," returned Dick. "You don't know what I have got. Suppose you did want to sell, what would be your price?"

"It is not necessary to say, sir. We do not want to sell, and will not sell, so there is no need of talking about it further. We have refused heavy offers from moneyed companies, but we are here to stay."

"Well, no use trying to buy what is not for sale," Dick finally agreed.

"But," he added, "if you won't sell your mine, perhaps you will sell something else."

"And what is that?" Barnthal inquired, in some surprise.

"That new building you have just put up."

Just then the door opened, and Samson Crapps entered. He looked at Dick with a questioning stare, and then at Barnthal.

"My partner, Mr. Crapps," Barnthal observed.

CHAPTER X.

MACDUFF MADE HAPPY.

MR. CRAPPS was a thin man.

He seemed nervous, too, as though he expected to see a ghost the next moment.

But he was well dressed, and put on as many airs as did his partner, though he could not appear quite so important.

Deadwood Dick inspected him as closely as he had already inspected Barnthal, and gave him an opportunity to speak first, if he would.

This Mr. Crapps did.

"You are a stranger to me, sir," he remarked; and then he looked around, as if to see if the ghost had appeared.

There was something mysterious in his man-

ner, hard to describe. What has been said already comes as near a description as anything else could, perhaps. His air was one of constant apprehension.

"My name is Golconda," Dick informed. "I have been trying to buy a share in your mine, but your partner will not hear to such a proposition."

Crapps looked from the elegant Golconda to Barnthal, as though for him to say something.

"Most decidedly not!" that gentleman cried.

"Of course not," echoed Crapps. "Couldn't think of it, sir."

"Well, that was settled," remarked Dick. "The question now is, Will you sell me that new building you have just put up? I had just asked Mr. Barnthal as you came in, Mr. Crapps."

Again did Crapps look at Barnthal for his opinion.

"Certainly not," that part of the combination cried.

"Very assuredly not, sir," Crapps followed up.

"Oh, yes you will," Dick opposed, laughing.

"Come, set your price on it, and that will settle it."

"What do you want it for?" Barnthal inquired.

"Why, I'll open a palace there," Dick replied.

"Just what we are going to do ourselves, sir. You can't have it. No, it is not for sale, and—"

"I know it is for sale," Dick persisted. "All that is in the way is fixing a price. Come, set a nice round figure that will make you feel good, and I'll buy it of you."

"Why, that place has cost us fifteen thousand dollars, already, and it will stand us in ten thousand more before we are done with it. You don't want it, at any such figures as that."

"That is where you make a mistake," said Dick. "I will give you fifteen thousand for it, just as it stands."

Barnthal looked at him searchingly.

"See here, what is your game, anyhow?" he demanded.

"It is plain and above-board," Dick made answer. "I have got money to invest, and want to unload some of it. If you make and I lose, so much the better for you and none the worse for me. A fool and his money are soon parted, you know."

Dick lay back in his chair, and puffed idly at his cigar.

The two mine-owners looked at each other, as if in doubt what to do about it.

Fingal McFaddin was working away, but his ears were open to everything that was said, and he wondered greatly.

"What are you willing to give for the building?" Barnthal asked.

"I have made an offer," Dick reminded.

"Yes, but we are not selling out at cost. You will have to bid a good deal higher than that, if you expect to get it."

"I don't think that would be selling at cost, not by five thousand dollars," the cool Richard declared. "But, if my offer don't suit, set your price. That is all you have got to do."

"Well, we won't take a cent less than twenty-five thousand dollars for the building, just as it stands."

"I will give that for it," said Dick. "Draw up a bill of sale, if you please."

He was as cool as a ton of ice.

The partners looked at each other amazed.

Here was something that they could not easily understand.

"You don't mean it!" Barnthal exclaimed.

"Of course I mean it," Dick assured. "Here is the money, and money talks you know."

As he spoke he ran his hand into a pocket and drew out a wad of bills.

It was not a roll, or package, but simply a wad, and carried as carelessly as though its value was nothing.

A glance at the bills as he separated them, and smoothed them out, showed that not one of them was less than a thousand in denomination. It was something that made the mine-kings stare more than ever.

"There you are, sir," said Dick, handing over the required sum, "and now draw up the bill of sale and let me have it. I have paid you your price."

Barnthal hesitated, as though regretting that he had not named a figure yet higher than that. But it was too late then, so he called out to McFaddin to draw up the paper in proper form, and it was soon done.

"There," remarked Barnthal, as he handed it over, when he and Crapps had signed, "it is yours, and dirt cheap, too. Now, I would like to know what you are going to do with it."

"And I have told you already," reminded

Dick. "I may change my mind about it, however, so you will have to wait and see."

"Well, as nothing was said to the contrary," Barnthal went on, "we shall begin the erection of another and better building immediately, and when we open we will probably hurt your trade."

"Oh, go right ahead," Dick invited. "The more the merrier, you know. Put up half a dozen, if you want to. No doubt you are well able to do it, and there is nothing like being public spirited."

He rose as he said this, and throwing away the cigar he had been smoking, lighted a fresh one.

"You are something of a fancy dresser," Barnthal observed.

Crapps was looking about, as though peering for a haunting shadow.

"A mere matter of taste," Dick responded.

"And now I will bid you good-morning, gentlemen. If I see anything more I want to buy, I will drop in and see you."

Barnthal made some reply, and Dick left the office and sauntered down the slope to the bottom of the gulch, where he soon found himself at the hotel once more.

The body of the dead man had been removed, and the crowd was gone.

Esmond Earle was on the piazza.

"Well, did you find it?" he asked.

"Yes, and I have made a purchase," Dick answered.

"What have you bought?"

"That new building."

"The deuce you have."

"Nothing less."

"And what are you going to do with it?"

"I think I'll turn it into a play-house; that is, a theater."

"Are you joking? What do you want a theater for? And where would you get your players?"

"Why, you have one right here in town, in Maximilian MacDuff, and if it comes to the worst, I can let him train as many more as he wants, out of whatever material he can pick up."

Earle laughed.

"That promises rare fun," he assured.

"And it will serve to keep curious ones busy talking," Dick further said. "It will serve a double purpose. But then you cannot understand all this now. You will probably see fun around here before I leave town."

"You speak in riddles, Golconda, but I can understand that there is something of deep importance in the wind."

"You guess aright. But, say no more now. Here comes MacDuff."

The seedy actor came up, and when he stopped he made a profound bow, reciting a few lines of the immortal bard.

"You are full of it, I see," Dick observed.

"Full to running over!" was the exclaimed return. "Oh! that I might once again tread the boards, as in the days of yore."

And then he went off into another fit of "spouting," giving them an exhibition of his art.

"Suppose I give you a chance to strut and fret your hour upon the stage once more," Deadwood Dick suggested.

"Ah! me soul leaps with gladness at the thought!"

"Well, sir, I think I can do it," Dick assured.

"The fires of youth burn again in me veins!"

"But, where will you find your support?" Dick inquired.

"Alack and alas! Oh, why did you raise my fond hopes, only to dash them to fragments against the rocks of despair!"

"Oh, keep up your spirits," Dick encouraged.

"We may be able to fix you out yet. Couldn't you take some of the material lying around loose here and train it? You would be the star, of course, and it wouldn't matter whether your support was first-class or not, we could see your merits."

"It might be done, I suppose, but the expense—"

"Oh don't bother your head about the expense, I will stand all that. Will you undertake it?"

"I will, and only be glad to do it."

Again did the stranded actor strut and pose and spout, greatly to the amusement of all who saw and heard.

"Well, sir," said Dick, when the scene ended, "I can fix you out in good shape, and we will have some fun here, and you can have half of the profits. I have bought the new building over there, and I will set men at work at once to make a stage and put in seats."

"Oh! happiness, happiness!" cried MacDuff,

joyously. "Verily, my cup runneth over with the wine of delight."

"Let her run," Dick encouraged. "Set to work and pick out your men, and I will pay them two dollars a day as long as they want to serve. Pick out your play, and go to rehearsing at once."

"It shall be done, me lord, it shall be done!"

And with a great scrape and bow and much ado, the stranded actor took himself off, leaving Dick and Earle smiling broadly.

Just then Miss Rulford was seen upon the other end of the piazza, and Earle bowed to her as she gave him a smile of recognition.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER CALL COMES.

EDMA RULFORD was truly a charming girl.

Deadwood Dick could not but admire her grace and beauty.

"She doesn't look much like an avenging Nemesis, I'll be hanged," Dick observed.

"No, she looks more like an angel of peace, I should say," responded Earle. "It cannot be possible that she is the Nemesis."

"I would like to be introduced to her, if possible," Dick remarked. "I wonder if she would object. I should like to hear her talk. What do you think about it?"

"Easy enough to find out. I will speak to her about it, if you want me to. I am anxious, too, for you to have a chance to hear her speak. You had more time to study the ghost's voice than I did."

"Yes, I suppose I did. Well, I will go into the house, in a few moments, and while I am gone you can ask the lady."

"I will do it, with pleasure."

Presently Dick rose and stepped into the bar-room, and Earle went forward to where Miss Rulford stood.

The young lady greeted him cordially, and they fell into conversation.

"Pardon me," she presently observed, "but who is that gentleman with whom you were talking?"

"You know he is the man who saved my life last night," Earle replied.

"Yes, I know, but I mean what is his name? Where is he from and what do you know about him?"

"His name is Golconda. He seems to be from everywhere. You can't mention a place but what he has been there."

"Is he a gambler?"

"Not by profession."

"I thought he might be."

"He seems to be a gentleman in every way."

"His manner is certainly such. But, how oddly he dresses. He is indeed, as the landlord says, a dazzler."

"By the way, Miss Rulford, he would like to make your acquaintance. Will you allow me to introduce him?"

"Yes, you may do so."

"Very well, I will."

They talked on, and in a little time Dick made his appearance again.

He looked around for Earle, and when he saw him Earle motioned him to come forward.

Dick did so, and was introduced.

A light and easy talk followed, during which Miss Rulford showed that she was educated, and able to hold her own against them both.

"There is something about your voice that makes me think I must have heard it before," Dick remarked, when the opportunity came round.

But it was not so. He could not find that it was like the voice of the ghost he had encountered in the canyon. He was merely testing the point Earle had raised.

"Where do you imagine you have heard it?" the young woman asked.

"That is not so easy to say. Still, it was not long ago— Ha! I have it. But, perhaps I had better not speak of it. If I do so it must be with an apology first for making such a comparison."

"Indeed! I am all the more eager to know, now. Tell me, please."

"Well, I recall the voice of the ghost I met in the canyon last night—"

Miss Rulford laughed merrily, interrupting.

"I had no idea that there is anything ghostly about my voice," she said.

"And I humbly offer my apology," Dick hastened to amend. "There is certainly nothing ghostly about that merry laugh of yours."

With a few words more the matter was dropped.

But an impression had been made upon Dick's mind. Whether it was so or not, he thought he

had detected a slight start when he mentioned the ghost and drew the comparison.

Finally Dick took his leave and did not meet Earle again until after dinner.

"I want to ask you something," Earle immediately said.

"Out with it," Dick invited.

"Did Miss Rulford's voice remind you of the ghost?"

"No, sir; I said what I did to see how she would take it."

"And what is your opinion now?"

"I don't know what to think. It is hard to believe that she is the Nemesis."

"Well, there is more mystery in it, somehow."

"What is it now?"

"She did not talk in exactly her natural voice when you was talking with her."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, it is so. I could notice it."

"That is strange, certainly. I don't know what to make of that."

"Nor do I. But we may be able to get at the bottom of the mystery. I hope that you will be able to find the Nemesis, and that it will prove not to be she."

"I hope so, for your sake," Dick responded.

They were on the hotel piazza at this time, and while they were talking the landlord came out of the bar-room and joined them.

"Jimminy!" he exclaimed, "but is it true that you has bought ther new buildin' over there?"

addressing Dick.

"You have got it right," Dick assured.

"Jimminy!" again, "but you is a dazzler. Ther boyees say you paid twenty-five thousand fer it, solid rocks."

"Then the boys have got it straight. That was the price."

"Jimminy!" yet again, "but et do beat all. What be you goin' ter do with et?"

"I am going to turn it into a theater. There, that reminds me that I must set carpenters at work. Are there any in your town, landlord?"

"Yas, but not very many on 'em. They is all workin', though, so you won't be very likely ter git 'em."

"We shall see about that. About what pay do they get?"

"Not more'n four dollars, I don't opine."

"Good enough. Have you got paper and ink handy?"

"Plenty of it, right in ther bar-room."

"I'll step in and put up a notice, I guess. Will you come along, Earle?"

"Yes, of course."

They went in, and when the landlord had furnished the materials in demand, Dick proceeded to write out this notice:

"WANTED!"

"Good carpenters wanted, and plenty of them. Wages will be six dollars a day. Apply to-morrow morning at the Bumblebee's Nest. Come ready for work. GOLCONDA THE GORGEOUS."

"There, how will that do?" Dick questioned, as he read it aloud.

"That will bring 'em," mine host declared.

"You'll git every one of 'em."

"Any objections to my tacking it on the corner post of the piazza?"

"Nary. Put it anywhere yer wants to."

In a few minutes it was posted up in the place named, and it drew the attention of every one who passed.

Dick and Earle resumed their conversation, and while they were talking a small body of men moved up the street, carrying something heavy.

"Hello! What is that?" Dick questioned.

"I guess it's a funeral procession," Earle suggested.

"Funeral of the late Mr. Cobbletree?"

"Yes, and of Blossom Bob, too. He has been carried in, and they are to be buried together."

"Two of a kind, eh?"

"Yes, two of a kind, and most of their mourners are about of the same stamp."

"They look it, but they are not mourning to any great extent. Instead, they seem to be quite jolly."

And this was true. No tears were being dropped, so far as could be seen. But, then, it is not the style in the wild and woolly West, on an occasion of that sort and under like circumstances.

The little company came on, and started to turn the corner by the post-office, the way that led to the mine.

"Where is your planting-ground?" Dick inquired.

"It is down the gulch, in the bottom."

Dick was about to ask something else, when a startling thing happened.

The little cortege was just rounding the corner, when one of the number suddenly threw up his hands and fell to the ground without a groan.

Instantly the others stopped, and consternation reigned immediately. As soon as they saw what had happened, they dropped the dead man they had been carrying and ran for cover.

"The Nemesis again!" exclaimed Earle.

And that was the cry the others were raising.

"It looks like it," Dick agreed.

"And no sound was heard."

"Nor has there been before."

"Perhaps it is natural death this time."

"Possibly, but I doubt it. By the way, we ought to find out where Miss Rulford is at this minute."

"True enough! How shall— Ha, there she is. The Nemesis is not she!"

The young woman in question just at that moment stepped out upon the piazza, as handsome as ever, and without a trace of excitement on her face.

Deadwood Dick looked puzzled.

She glanced at him and Earle, nodded, and then she noticed the excitement over at the corner.

"What has happened?" she inquired, in her musical tones.

"It looks like another victim of the Nemesis of Nutmeg," Dick informed.

"Is it possible!" she exclaimed.

"Who is the fellow that dropped?" Dick asked of Earle.

"He is called Mouthy Mose," was the reply.

"Let's step over and take a look at him."

"Very well, I'm with you."

Quite a crowd was gathering, but no one had yet ventured to go to the fallen man.

When they reached him, Dick and Earle turned him over, and found that he was dead, and that there was a pool of blood under him.

Dick looked for the wound, and found that the bullet had entered the back, behind the left shoulder-blade, and had pierced the heart. Death had been sure and sudden to the fellow.

"It is a puzzle," Dick owned. "That bullet came from our side of the street, and from about the direction of the hotel."

"And yet we know that the young lady did not fire it," observed Earle.

Dick did not respond, but was thoughtful.

CHAPTER XII.

PREPARING FOR—WHAT?

WHEN the shock was over, the funeral went on.

Mouthy Mose was a low, drunken villain, and no time was wasted with him.

He was picked up and carried along with the other two, and all three were put in one grave.

The afternoon passed without further excitement, except that occasioned by the events already recorded, which were talked over wherever two or three came together, either by chance or design.

The notice posted by Golconda the Gorgeous created quite a stir, too.

Every man who was a carpenter, and many others who claimed to be, resolved in a quiet way that they would be on hand for the employment offered.

Information concerning this notice finally reached the office of the Nutmeg Bonanza.

Said Stephen Barnthal:

"Crapps, that fellow is bound to have our men away from us, I mean our carpenters. What are we going to do about it?"

"We'll have to raise their pay higher than he offers, I s'pose," Crapps made answer.

As he did so, he looked furtively about, as though to see if a ghost or goblin were near.

"No, I'll be hanged if we do!" cried Barnthal.

"Then I reckon they'll go," said Crapps, logically.

"And what'll we do then?"

"We'll have to get on without them till we can get them back. He won't want them many days at that rate."

"I don't know about that. He has got slathers of wealth, to judge by what we have seen of his pile."

"Well, it is one thing or the other. We will have to come up to his offer, or let them go."

"Then we will let them go, that's all. But, we will give them a scare. We'll tell them they need not come back to us if they leave us now, in this way. Steady work at our pay is better than a few days' work at higher."

"That may work. May as well notify them at once, I suppose."

"You're right. McFaddin, go and tell the

foreman that if any of our carpenters leave us, they leave for good. Can't come back again."

"All right, sir."

The bookkeeper took his hat and went out, and Barnthal drew nearer to his partner.

"There's been another death in town," he announced.

Crapps started violently, and looked around as though for his ghost.

"Who—who is it?" he asked.

"Mouthy Mose."

"And was it—was it—the—the Nemesis?"

"Exactly."

"Oh, mercies! When will it ever stop?"

Again he looked about him, peering into every shadowy corner, as though by force of habit.

"I wish you would get rid of that hang-dog air," Barnthal complained. "Any one would think that you are afraid of seeing the ghost, along with the rest. Brace up, and don't be a baby."

"That's well enough to say, but I can't do it. Can't that wholesale butcher be stopped in his career? I tremble for my life every hour."

"That is just what I want to speak to you about. Hadn't we better put up a big reward, and see what will come of it?"

"You said you had promised ten thousand dollars already."

"And so I have, but we'll make it more."

"How much more?"

"Double."

"That ought to do it."

"It will do it, if there's any brains in the town."

"Well, put it up, and we'll stand to it. If they can find and bring this fellow to account, I shall know some peace."

"Bah! What have you to fear? Brace up again, now, for here comes McFaddin."

That evening the following notice, posted in various places, attracted the interest of the citizens of Nutmeg, viz:—

"PUBLIC NOTICE!"

"Citizens of Nutmeg, arouse! Something has got to be done! A murderer is at large in our midst! His career must be brought to a close! He must be hunted down!"

"\$20,000 REWARD \$20,000!"

This sum will be paid in cash to any person who will hunt down and turn over to the law the self-styled Nemesis of Nutmeg Bonanza. Let us see what you can do, men of Nutmeg."

"BARNTHAL AND CRAPPS."

It was something that could not fail to draw attention, and in a little while crowds were seen at every point where the notice had been posted. Everybody was filled with the desire to turn detective, with the hope of winning the big reward.

Said one man:

"Et would be nice ter finger ther pile, but I fer one don't banker ter run ther resk o' gettin' one o' them silent bullets inter me."

And there were a good many more of the same mind.

As Maximilian MacDuff observed:

"There's never a rose without a thorn, and in this case the thorn is so sharp and dangerous, that my advice is to leave the rose alone."

"Them's my senterments, too," chimed in some one else. "Durn me ef I'm goin' ter endanger my health by foolin' about tryin' ter capter ther Nemmysus."

But still there were longing eyes turned toward that tempting poster.

Next morning something else was discovered.

Over each one of the notices, no matter where it happened to be, was another, as follows:

"XXXXXXXXXXXX."

"I bid defiance to all men!"

"Take me if you can. See the score!"

Four more to be called, was what the score indicated.

Who would those four be? Perhaps more than one man trembled in his boots.

That morning Deadwood Dick found that he had his hands full. Carpenters seemed to spring up out of the very stones of the ground. Every man who could bunt up an old saw, hammer or chisel, was on hand.

They were collected in front of the hotel, and after breakfast Dick went out on the piazza to greet them.

"By the looks of the crowd," he spoke, "this seems to be a town of carpenters. How many of you are first-class workmen?"

Every man in the crowd shouted his ability to fill that requirement.

"I have my doubts about that," said Dick.

"Be yer own judge, boss," spoke up one man in the front.

He was a keen-eyed fellow, with a full box of tools at his feet.

"I guess I'll have to," Dick decided. "Is there a boss-carpenter in the crowd, capable of taking hold of a big job?"

"I'm yer oyster," said the fellow who had already spoken. "I kin build anything from a dog-house to a church. All you have got to do is try me."

"Well, I guess I will. You will be boss of the gang, and your wages will be seven-fifty a day."

The fellow's face brightened, and the crowd looked on in amazement.

"Now," Dick directed, "you pick out every good carpenter in the crowd. I suppose you have been here long enough to know them all."

"Bet yer life I have, and I'll sift 'em soon."

The man picked up his box and advanced to the piazza, where he turned and faced the crowd and began to make his selections.

In a few moments he had picked out ten men, and there he stopped.

It looked as though first-class carpenters were not so plentiful after all.

"Good enough, I'll let you be the judge," remarked Dick. "I'll pay these men six dollars, as advertised. Now pick out another batch, men that you know can tell a saw from a hammer at sight."

Twelve more men were soon selected, and then Dick promised four dollars a day.

"Jimminy!" exclaimed the landlord, "but this hyar do beat all that I ever heerd of. You is the durndest dazzler, Mister Golconder, that I ever see."

Dick did not pay any attention to this, but turned to his boss-carpenter and inquired his name.

"My name is Eli Hoppole," was the reply.

"Good enough, Eli. You take your men and put down their names and keep their time straight. As soon as you get your book ready, then I'll set you at your work."

In half an hour Mr. Hoppole reported that he was ready.

Dick had previously learned, by inquiry, that Hoppole was the man who had been foreman for Barnthal and Crapps, and that he was a first-class man.

"All ready, are you," Dick remarked.

"Yes, sir, every man of us," Hoppole assured.

"Come along, then, and I'll show you what is to be done. And it must be done just as soon as possible, too. If you can do it in two days I'll double your pay, so don't try to stretch it out. I may have other work for you."

"Oh, I'm fair and square in that line. My name is Eli, you know, and I make it a point to git thar when I can."

Dick led the way to his new purchase, and entered the building.

"Now," he said, "I want this place turned into a theater. I want a good stage put up, and— But, have you ever done anything of the sort?"

"You bet! Have made three or four, from ther ground up."

"All right. I was going to say that I would let MacDuff, the actor, have something to say about how it should be, but it won't be necessary."

"Don't want him around at all," Hoppole declared. "He would be worse than no good. You will find that I can do it all right."

"Well, go right ahead. Put up a good stage, and good, solid seats, and as soon as the work is done come and get your pay."

So the work was given out, and so it was commenced.

And while it was in progress that day, Maximilian MacDuff was scouring the town for talent to support him in a play he had selected.

Rare fun was looked for by the public at large, but there was more back of it all than any of them dreamed of. Deadwood Dick was not the man to go to all this trouble for nothing.

This Esmond Earle knew, of course, and he was eager to see the ending of the interesting game.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GHOST SEEN AGAIN.

THIS, too, was stage-day at Nutmeg Bonanza. The stage was booked to arrive twice a week, and generally did.

On this day the lumbering old hearse came rolling into the gulch about on time, and the rein-manipulator gave his usual whoop as he came to a stop in front of the Bumblebee's Nest.

"Hyar we be, pilgrims!" he shouted. "Hyar's Nutmeg Bonanzer, ther wu'st place this side

o'— Whoop! Stop yer friskin' thar, ye homely brute, or I'm a lunk-head ef I don't git down thar an' bite yer ear!"

This was addressed to one of the four mules with which the stage was furnished.

The hybrid seemed eager to get on to the stables.

Several passengers were aboard the stage, and they proceeded to unload themselves as soon as the stage had stopped.

There were four or five who tumbled down from the top, rough-looking fellows, who bolted for the bar-room as soon as they touched the ground.

From the inside, two men and one woman got out. The woman was heavily veiled, so that no one could tell whether she was young or old, white or black. One of the men was flashily dressed, and not bad-looking, but had a dissipated air. The other was a keen-eyed fellow, wearing a big diamond.

The woman went at once into the hotel, and it was evident that she was traveling alone. One of the men walked leisurely to the bar-room, and the other, the last mentioned, remained behind to see that his baggage was properly handled.

He had two big trunks, besides two or three valises.

The usual crowd was around, but when the stage had gone on to the stables, and the mail had been carried to the post-office, the crowd melted away.

Deadwood Dick and Esmond Earle were on the piazza at the time, and remained sitting there.

Naturally, they had comments to make on the passengers.

"That woman has some reason for wearing such a heavy veil," observed Dick. "It is no joke, such a warm day."

"You are right," agreed Earle; "and do you know, I feel that that fellow is going to come in for a share of my interest."

"Which one?"

"The one that's going toward the bar-room."

"Perhaps he will turn out to be the man you are after."

"Maybe he will. The other seems to be well fixed with baggage. Wonder what he will turn out to be."

"We shall see, no doubt."

After a time they got up and went into the bar-room, for Earle was curious to know who the man was.

As they entered, they saw the one with the big diamond talking with the landlord, and the landlord pointing at Dick, said:

"Thar's yer man, now."

Dick showed no surprise, but Earle did.

The man turned away from the bar, and stepping up to Dick, made himself known.

"My name is Murry," he said. "I am advance agent for a dramatic company. When I inquire of the landlord about a building I might engage, he mentioned that you own one that will suit me exactly. Can I hire it?"

"What sort of a company do you represent?"

"A first-class one. We are playing 'The Jumped Claim,' a drama of the wild mining lands of the West, and it is a big success."

"Well, you might have it, and welcome," said Dick. "But there is a contract in the way. If you can buy that up, in any way, you are welcome to the building. I am just fixing it up as a theater, for a fellow here named MacDuff. He is preparing to bring out a play as soon as he can get it ready."

"Where can I find him?" Murry asked.

"There he is, now," answered Dick.

Maximilian had just come in, and Dick motioned him to come forward.

The situation was explained to him, and after some little talk he finally agreed to give up the place for a week for a consideration of one hundred dollars.

The money was in his hand about as soon as the words were out of his mouth, and it was settled. The hall was turned over to Mr. Murry, who was to have possession as soon as it was ready.

Before night, flaming posters were to be seen all over the town, announcing the coming attraction. Lithographs of three charming young ladies, in stage attire, proclaimed these not least among the promised features. And these posters drew the admiring crowd, wherever one happened to be posted.

"THE GREAT EASTERN DRAMATIC COMPANY,

"PLAYING

"THE JUMPED CLAIM!"

"It is the hit of the season. Don't miss it! Come

one and all, and take it in. You will live long and die happy if you do. The best play out!

"THE THREE CUBAN SISTERS,

"INEZ, ELODIE, AND JANELIA,

THE

"QUEENS OF SONG!

"See small bills."

So the posters set forth.

The small bills were not out yet, but were promised. The agent had to fill in the time and place of the company's appearing.

It was just growing dark when Deadwood Dick and Esmond Earle strolled up the gulch toward the canyon, smoking their cigars and talking about the coming play, and of other things.

"I have no doubt it will be a very cheap affair," observed Earle, "but of course it will be well patronized."

"No doubt about that part of it. But, did you find out anything about the man you thought might be your game?"

"He registered as Edwin Hargrave."

"That don't prove anything."

"I know it, but how am I to get at him?"

"We must try him together. If he is your man, we can trip his tongue into a trap in some way or other."

"Well, it will do no harm to try it. I wish I had some good clew to work on. If I had ever seen him, it would be different."

"Yes, then you would have a better chance. And the woman, did you learn anything about her? Did you get a look at her face? I did not see her at all after she entered the house."

"Nor did I. She registered as Mrs. Marsh. I guess we shall have nothing to do with her."

"Probably not."

They kept on their walk, till they were finally near the head of the canyon, when they stopped.

"Guess we don't want to go any further this way," remarked Dick.

"No," agreed Earle. "We might run against a snag in the shape of the Nemesis. We don't want to taste of one of those silent bullets."

"No, not any. Well, shall we wander back?"

"May as well sit down here in the cool and finish our cigars."

"Just as you say! Perhaps we shall be favored with a sight of the ghost."

"I don't look for anything of that sort, but here is the boulder where I sat the evening that I saw it."

They took seats upon the inviting stone, and went on with their talk, and soon had forgotten all about the ghostly mystery.

While they were still there, and at the time when their conversation flagged for a moment, they heard other voices, and in the dim light saw two men coming up the trail toward the canyon.

"Those fellows must enjoy a dismal walk, if they're going through the canyon," remarked Dick, in low tone.

"And that's where they're heading for," said Earle.

"Do you know them?"

"Can't be sure, but think I know one of them. He's called Red Leary."

The fellows were now about abreast of where Dick and his companion sat, and were about to enter the canyon, when with exclamations of horror they stopped short.

There before them was the ghost, the avenging Nemesis of Nutmeg!

Deadwood Dick quickly grasped Earle's arm, to warn him not to speak or let their presence be known.

But it was not necessary, for Earle had no thought of doing either.

The two fellows recoiled in terror, as the ghostly figure raised its right arm and pointed at them.

"Well may you tremble," came the words, in a hollow, deep voice. "Well may you fall back, for you know that you are doomed. You were trying to get away from me, but you cannot do that. The world is not large enough to hide you from me. Turn back, and prepare for death."

The words ceased, but the ghostly figure stood still, the right arm pointing, and with only a moment's hesitation the two frightened fellows wheeled and started for the town on a run.

Deadwood Dick had paid close attention to the voice, but could not find anything in it that suggested Miss Rulford's.

Nor could Esmond Earle, now. The voice was deeper and stranger than either of them had heard before.

It was probably disguised, anyhow. They believed, so that counted for little.

Still the ghost remained, and when Red Leary and his companion turned once, and saw it still there, they redoubled their efforts to get away.

Then the right arm of the specter fell, and it turned back into the canyon.

At that moment Deadwood Dick sprang up.

"One word, Lady Specter!" he cried.

The ghost stopped short and looked back.

"Well?" it queried.

"Who and what are you?" Dick demanded.

"I recognize your voice," was the answer he got, "and you ought to know. I am the Nemesis of Nutmeg."

"Then I call upon you to surrender. You are covered, and to try to run off will cost you your life. What will you do?"

A laugh of defiance was the answer.

"How would you set about killing a specter?" was the demand. "You talk wildly. Instead, beware how you cross my path, or it may be the worse for you."

"I did not mean what I said," Dick explained, then. "You asked a favor of me the other night. I carried out your request. In return, will you not disclose your identity to me?"

"It is impossible. I am a ghost, and nothing more. Would you be convinced of this? Then, behold!"

The figure in white gave a wild flutter, as though suddenly caught by a strong wind, and it was gone. And then back from the darkness of the canyon came the mocking laugh of the Nemesis.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER "DAZZLE" ARRIVES.

DEADWOOD DICK was amazed.

He and Earle looked at each other.

"What do you think about it?" Earle inquired.

"Hang me if I know what to think, now," Dick declared.

"It disappeared right before our very eyes, in a true ghostly way."

"There is something mighty peculiar about the whole business. I don't understand it. Well, we are left, that's sure."

"It looks that way. Shall we go back to town?"

"Yes, let's go and see what those fellows do."

So they set out, and in due season were again at the hotel.

"Seen anything of Red Leary?" asked Earle, of the landlord.

"Jimmie!" mine host exclaimed, "yes."

"Where is he?"

"Him an' Blue-bottle Jake went sailin' past here a leetle while ago, sayin' as how they'd seen ther ghost, an' I reckon they headed straight fer ther Bung Hole."

The "Bung Hole" was the name of a saloon where the worst grade of the town's denizens usually congregated.

"We'll take a walk over there," said Dick.

So they set out.

The saloon in question was on the other side of the street, further down.

In a few moments they were at its portals, and entered.

The two fellows in question were there, both very much heated, and both greatly excited, as they were telling of their adventure.

"And what is yer goin' ter do about et?" one of their cronies inquired.

"We can't do nothin' but keep out o' sight as much as possible," answered Red Leary.

"Why don't yer dust out?" asked another.

"Et ain't no use," declared Blue-bottle Jake. "Et has been tried afore."

"Then do you mean to give up, and fall victims, as the others have done?" asked Deadwood Dick.

"Thar's nothin' else we kin do, fer thar's no use fightin' ag'in' a spook. We is goners, I allow," was Jake's doleful response.

"Why don't you disguise yourselves, and sneak away?" Dick asked.

"We don't opine thar'd be any sort o' use," replied Red Leary. "Ther Nemmysus means biz, an' thar's all thar is about et."

"Then you had better improve the time that is allowed you," suggested Earle.

"Why don't you make a confession of your misdeeds?" asked Dick.

The two rascals looked at him keenly.

"Who be you, anyhow?" Blue-bottle Jake demanded.

"I am just what I am," was the return. "I'm a gentleman of wealth and leisure."

"And mebbey you're into this spook game, too."

"That's where you are mistaken."

"Ther pair of ye jest kem up from ther canyon-way, anyhow," some one in the crowd cried out.

"That's all right," said Dick; "we saw the ghost, too. But that don't make it appear that we had any hand in it. Such is not the case. We were simply out for a walk, and nothing more."

"That's only your say so."

"If you will step out here and show yourself, I'll make it appear to you that it is so," Dick promised.

The fellow mumbled something, and lapsed into silence.

Dick advanced to where Red Leary and Blue-bottle Jake were standing, and began to question them, in low tones.

What he wanted to get at was, to learn what they had done, in the past, to incur the hatred of their enemy, the Nemesis.

But he gained nothing. Their mouths were tight sealed on that question, and they would give him no satisfaction. So finally he gave it up, and he and Earle went back to the hotel.

They found Miss Rulford and two other ladies seated on the far end of the piazza, enjoying the evening air.

Stopping there for a moment, they both observed that there was nothing about the young woman's appearance to indicate that she had recently figured in an exciting scene.

She was as cool, calm, and pretty as ever.

"It is settled that she is not the Nemesis," remarked Earle, as they went to the bar-room.

"That is the way it looks," Dick agreed.

He was far from saying that he was satisfied about it, however.

Next morning the town had good cause for excitement, and had it to the full.

Dead on the street lay Blue-bottle Jake and Red Leary, with bullets through the heart, and on them was pinned the terrible score:

"XXXXXXXXXXXXXII."

It need not be said that the town went nearly wild.

Where was this matter to stop? The score indicated that only two more would be called, but who would those two be?

It could be fairly stated that every man trembled in his boots—that is, every one who had any reason to tremble.

Said Stephen Barnthal:

"This unlawful work must end. What is going to be done about it, men of Nutmeg? I leave it to you. What is going to be done?"

But no one offered to solve the problem for him.

"I'll add another five thousand to that reward, that's what I'll do," the big man of the burgh declared. "I'll make it twenty-five thousand dollars to any man who will bring this Nemesis to a halter."

There were few ladders, even at that price—in fact, none.

As for Samson Crapps, he was knocked out entirely. When he heard the news he did not venture to leave the house.

He told Barnthal privately that he would not be able to draw a full breath till that terrible score had been filled up complete.

How the two fellows, Leary and Jake, had been got at, could not be guessed, for they had declared their intention of spending the night in the rear room of the Bung Hole, and there the proprietor of that den had left them on closing for the night.

When found, they were about half-way between the saloon and the hotel.

It was truly a terrible vendetta.

The dead men were taken up and buried, and, as one irreverent fellow observed, the cemetery was about the most thriving institution the town could boast, just then.

But all this did not interfere with the work that was being done in the building Deadwood Dick had bought. That was being pushed right along, and Eli Hoppole was proving that he was all he claimed to be.

"I'll git thar, as Eli generally does," he told Dick. "You'll see ther work done by night."

"That is what I want," Dick assured him, privately. "You have it done by night, and I'll give you a clean hundred dollars for the job."

"I'm yer turnip, top and all," Mr. Hoppole declared. "Et aire as good as done already. Ef yer show comes fer town ter-night, they kin go on with their preformance, an' Eli says so."

Dick sought out Murry, the advance agent.

"When will that company of yours be here?" he inquired.

"It ought to be here this afternoon, sure," he was told.

So the word was passed around, as Dick had asked the question in public, and all the town was eager to witness the coming.

It was about two o'clock in the day, when a strain of music broke upon the ears of some of Nutmeg's citizens, and the cry went up instantly that the "circus" was at hand. People hurried to the street, and in about one minute quite a crowd was collected.

There was music in the air, literally. The dulcet strains of a horn were heard, wafted on the breeze from the direction of the canyon. This lasted for some minutes, coming nearer the while. Then suddenly the lively rattle and crash of snare and base-drum and the blare of brass instruments, burst forth upon the air, and Nutmeg Bonanza just got up and whooped itself hoarse.

This was something entirely new and novel in its experience, and it created a lively sensation, decidedly. People came running from every direction, and the street was speedily crowded.

"Jimminy!" cried Hank Woolly, "but et do beat all. They say there's nothin' new under ther sun, but I opine that this hyar aire somethin' new fer Nutmeg. Et jest beats ther wery dickins, an' that's what I'm sayin'."

And many others agreed with him. The music was coming nearer, and finally it burst out loud and clear, as the band emerged from the canyon.

First appeared the horses, gayly caparisoned with a high plume on the head of each. Then came a great, glittering band chariot, the players perched on high seats, all clad in the gayest of uniforms.

There were eight of the horses, and it certainly was a splendid sight, as they came prancing down the gulch and into the town.

"Jimminy!" exclaimed Hank Woolly, "but et do beat all. Weryly, ther world seems ter be turned upside-down."

And the others agreed with him. When the grand chariot reached the Bumblebee's Nest, the ribbon manipulator drew the horses to a stop, and the band crashed out the remainder of the piece that was being played.

As soon as the playing ceased the crowd sent up a howl that was intended to be a rousing cheer.

On the lower seats of the chariot, behind the band, sat the female members of the dramatic company.

There were three young ladies, all good-looking, and all richly dressed. And with them were two older women, evidently their maids. Besides these there was a young man who might be set down at sight as the proprietor of the show.

When the cheering ceased, the ladies were helped out and conducted into the hotel, and the band-players filed into the bar-room.

Murry, the advance agent, was on hand, and he directed the driver to the building where the company was to play.

There the baggage and properties were unearthed from the mysterious depths of the gorgeous vehicle, and carried into the hall.

The town was going wild over the prospects ahead.

Said one man: "I'm a lunk-headed lizzard ef I don't take in this hyar show, ef it costs me a month's wages ter do et!"

And that seemed to be the sentiment expressed by everybody else.

Certainly a big time was looked for.

CHAPTER XV.

"THE JUMPED CLAIM."

DEADWOOD DICK was a quiet observer. He and Esmond Earle were on the piazza, smoking.

No one, by the way, had mentioned bringing Earle to trial for the killing of Joe Gables.

It was not likely that the case would ever be mentioned again, and certainly the good-intentioned citizens had no time to attend to so trifling a matter now, when a greater attraction was at hand.

"This show promises a good deal," observed Earle, "and by the looks of things, it will be well patronized."

"Yes, all the indications point that way," Dick agreed. "By the way," he added, "I suppose you will attend?"

"Oh, certainly. If I did not, I would be the odd sheep of the flock. Everybody will be there."

"I guess you are right. I was going to tell you not to miss it. You may see something that is not down on the bills."

Earle looked at Dick in a questioning way.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Say nothing," was the response, "but come and see."

"All right. I begin to see your hand in all this."

Deadwood Dick smiled.

In order to keep his promise, and win the reward, Mr. Eli Hopple had to put in an hour over time that day.

It was after seven o'clock when he came to Dick and reported that the stage and seats were done, and that the place was ready to open.

"I had ter hump myself ter do et," he owned, "but Eli got thar."

"And that is all that was wanted," said Dick. "Here is your pay, and now I will go down and pay the men."

He went to the piazza, where the men waited, and as Hopple called their names they stepped up and received their money.

It had been about the quickest piece of work that had ever been done in that town, everybody declared.

"Jimminy!" cried Hank Woolly, "but you is ther dazzler. Ef you wanted a tower o' Bable, now, you could have et sot up in ten days."

"And I'd like ter be ther man ter build et," declared Hopple.

Dick laughed.

"When I want one," he said, "I'll let you know."

The members of the dramatic company had been hard at work, too, ever since their arrival, working against time.

But, like Eli, they "got there," and the opening hour, eight o'clock, found them ready for business.

At that hour, sharp, the band set up its brazen blare, and the place was ablaze with lights. And outside a crowd surged before the doors.

Every place of business in the town was closed, and every man, woman and child was eager to see the great performance, which, to many of them, was the first of the kind in their lives.

When the doors were thrown open, after the band struck up, Deadwood Dick was seen to be the first man at the office.

There was a tool-chest near the window, and mounting that, he motioned the surging crowd back with both hands, while he said:

"Citizens of Nutmeg, this is my treat. I'm going to give every man, woman and chick a free pass into this show. Don't want to hear a word to the contrary from any of you. Mr. Ticket-man, what will you sell the performance for? Set your figure, and I'll buy it, and throw open the doors."

"Jimminy!" cried out the worthy landlord of the Bumblebee's Nest. "Did yer ever see sich a dazzler? You must be made o' money, me Gorgeous Golconder, and it's me that's sayin' it."

"By me halidom," exclaimed Maximilian MacDuff, "I never saw anything like it."

The man at the office was looking over the crowd, and apparently calculating what the receipts would be.

"You will have to bid high," he remarked.

"No matter, set your figure," Dick responded.

"Well, our price is two dollars a head, and there's a prospect of selling a thousand tickets. You can have the house at two thousand dollars."

Dick coolly drew a wad of bills from his jacket pocket, selected two of them, and handed them over.

The house was his for the evening.

"Throw open the doors," he ordered.

And it was done.

"Now, citizens," he directed, "file in, and enjoy the treat to the full."

In about five minutes that building was as full as though it had been packed by power pressure.

"Now," Dick further directed, "keep up the music, but do not allow the play to begin till I return."

"It shall be as you request, sir," promised the proprietor.

Dick went off, in company with Esmond Earle, and the pair made their way to the house where Barnthal and Crapps lived.

Arriving there, Dick extended to those gentlemen a cordial invitation to attend the play. As they had built the house, he said, it was right that they should enjoy its opening night.

Crapps tried to draw out of it, but urged on by the others, he finally agreed to go, and they set out.

When they reached the hall, they were given reserved seats well up in front, and then the signal was given for the play to begin.

The band at once laid aside the brazen horns, and taking up lighter instruments, transformed itself into an orchestra.

A lively air was struck up, and presently the print curtain was raised.

There was a wild stamping, then, and a general uproar.

A young woman soon appeared, and tripping lightly down the boards to the footlights, parted her lips and made the place ring with a happy song.

When she ended, the noise was enough to start every nail in the building. It was simply deafening. It was such a noise as only a wild Western town can make, at short notice. It was meant for applause.

The three young women of the company came out together, then, and gave two or three songs in succession.

Other special features followed, and then the manager stepped forward to the front, and said:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: We are now about to begin our play, The Jumped Claim. Your quiet attention is respectfully asked. If there are exciting scenes, or unexpected denouements, please remain quiet through all. Keep your seats, every one, and we will endeavor to do our best. A glance at the programme that has been distributed will show you that the first scene will depict two lonely prospectors, something that may be quite familiar to many of you by personal experience."

He used more words perhaps, but that was the sum of it all.

As he stepped back, a second curtain was raised, and a rugged valley and mountain scene was disclosed. In the distance was the head of a canyon, before it, a gulch broadened out, and on one side was a ragged mountain slope.

It was strikingly like the gulch in which stood the town of Nutmeg Bonanza!

And immediately a hum of whispered comment told that it was recognized.

One man, near the front, was decidedly pale, and on the face of another settled a look of dogged bravo. These two were, respectively, Stephen Barnthal and Samson Crapps.

In a few moments two typical miners appeared upon the scene, coming from the canyon and walking wearily down the gulch.

"Et looks like a likely spot, pard," one observed.

"Thet et do," agreed the other.

They stopped and looked about them, critically.

"We'll camp hyar, anyhow, and give et a try."

"Yas, we must camp somewhar, and this hyar is invitin'."

They dropped their traps, and when they had rested, took their picks and went to the slope.

There they attacked some rocks that had been laid on the stage, and presently one of them uttered a cry.

"What aire et?" asked the other.

"A nugget ez big as a nutmeg!" was the exclaimed reply.

The face of Samson Crapps was as pale as death itself, and perspiration was dropping from his forehead. The lines of Barnthal's face, too, were hard and drawn.

The excited prospectors examined their find, and then their picks attacked the rocks with renewed vigor, making the splinters fly in all directions.

Presently they gave shouts of delight, dropped their picks, and gathered up some of the fragments.

"Plenty of 'em! plenty of 'em!" they cried.

"And all ez big ez nutmegs, too! Pard, we'll call it Nutmeg Bonanza!"

The audience broke into a wild cheer.

"Bully!" some one cried out. "Eureka! Et are Barnthal and Crapps findin' their great mine!"

So all thought, perhaps—that is, all who did not know different.

"Now we have got glad news fer home, Temple," one of the happy miners said, as the two sat down.

"Right!" exclaimed the other. "No more poverty now, Noland."

Barnthal and Crapps were trembling like aspen leaves.

Suddenly the reports of rifles were heard, and the two fortunate prospectors rolled over, dead.

In the same moment, out from behind some bushes sprung two other men, running forward to where the dead men lay.

With a groan of horror and terror, Samson Crapps slipped out of his seat and to the floor, gasping:

"Mercy! mercy! I will confess it all!"

"Fool!" hissed Barnthal, springing up, revolver in hand.

But there was no time for action. Golconda the Gorgeous and Maximilian MacDuff were upon the two men, and they were handcuffed in the fraction of a moment.

The wildest excitement prevailed, and trouble might have followed, but the band struck up, and the manager of the company was seen on the stage, motioning the audience to order.

Something like order was soon had, and then Deadwood Dick sprung to the stage, and, hat in hand, addressed the audience.

CHAPTER XVI.

WRONG MADE RIGHT.

It needed but the appearance of "Golconda the Gorgeous" to command almost perfect silence.

It was a moment of the most intense excitement, but excitement suppressed, and everybody was eager to learn what it all meant.

"Citizens of Nutmeg," spoke Deadwood Dick, his voice ringing out sharp and clear, "you have witnessed more than you anticipated. Instead of a play you have seen a page from a tragedy in real life. You have seen a horrible murder reacted, and before you, in the persons of Stephen Barnthal and Samson Crapps, you see the murderers."

"It is a lie!" Barnthal screamed. "You can't prove it!"

"Yes, yes," confessed the trembling Crapps, "it is the truth! We are guilty! I confess to it all!"

"Fool!" cried the other, "you are crazy!"

"It is as I have stated it," assured Deadwood Dick, calmly. "And now listen, citizens, to the true history of your town."

"Over ten years ago, Everard Temple and Martin Noland, prospectors, came into this valley, and here they discovered and claimed the Nutmeg Bonanza Mine. After the discovery they wrote letters home to their wives, telling them of their good fortune. In those letters, mention was made of two men who had formerly been their partners, but who had left them. These men were Stephen Barnthal and Samson Crapps. A few days later these men came into the gulch, and claimed a share in the find. They were rightly refused. Thereupon they resorted to the foul deed which you have seen depicted on these boards."

"Lynch 'em! Lynch 'em!" was the cry.

"Keep your seats, citizens," Dick ordered, "and hear me out. There was a witness to this crime, and one whom I have found. He was a mere youth then, and as he knew none of the parties, and feared to let himself be seen, he disappeared. But, it is not now necessary to produce him, since you have all heard the confession of Samson Crapps. The letters sent home by Temple and Noland built up the hopes of their wives, but they waited in vain for further tidings of their loved ones. No other letters ever came, and the husbands and fathers were never seen again. Finally the mothers died, of broken hearts, leaving three orphan girls alone in the world. These girls are now grown to young ladies, and you have seen them here to-night."

"Oh! hang their cusses! Burn 'em alive!"

Such cries came from every part of the house.

"In a manner which I need not explain," Dick went on, "I became interested in the matter, and took the case in hand to sift it to the bottom, with the purpose of running the rascals to earth, and restoring these young ladies to their rights. I have been a year and longer at the task, off and on, since I began it. My helper, who has been among you for months, picking up clues, has been known to you as Maximilian MacDuff. He is, in truth, an able detective, and to him much of the success of the case is due. We hunted down our men, Barnthal and Crapps, got our evidence against them, and then we adopted this means of springing our trap upon them in the presence of the whole town."

"But, pard, who be you?" was called out.

"I have no desire to make myself known further—"

So Dick tried to get out of it, but he was interrupted by a loud, eager and urgent demand. That one voice had expressed the desire of every person in the hall.

"Well, if you will know," he complied, "I am Dick Bristol, Detective; better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior."

If there had been applause before, there was more now. It was a perfect thunder. The name was known.

When comparative quiet was again restored, Dick went on with what he had to say.

"Let me have the pleasure of introducing to

you," he said, "in the three so-called Cuban sisters, the rightful owners of all that has been so long usurped by the murderers of their fathers."

He looked around, and the three girls came forward.

"These," he said, "are Inez and Janie Temple, and this other is Elodie Noland. It is for you, men of Nutmeg, to see that they are maintained in their rights."

"We will! We will!"

"And we'll lynch their murderers, too!" cried others.

"No, no," Deadwood Dick objected, "they must be dealt with according to law. You have no right to do what you propose. They must—"

But he was wonderfully interrupted.

Stephen Barnthal suddenly sprung up, with a cry, and fell to the floor. And immediately after, Samson Crapps sunk down without a sound.

Then was heard a ghostly, mocking laugh, and a piece of paper came floating down through the air, finally settling upon one of the dead men—for dead both were.

That paper was quickly picked up and handed to Deadwood Dick, who, glancing at it, saw that it held simply the completed score of the Nemesis of Nutmeg.

"XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX"

Where those silent bullets had come from, no one could guess.

It is useless to try to picture the excitement that prevailed. It was simply overwhelming. Never had the town of Nutmeg Bonanza seen the like.

It was some time before Deadwood Dick could make himself heard again, and then he made known all that it was necessary to tell, further, of the matter. He was the head and prime mover of it all, and the alleged dramatic company was merely a part of the means employed to reach the end desired. Of course it is unnecessary to mention that all that had passed between Dick and MacDuff was mere by-play. And other points, too, need not be explained at length, since the denouement has made them clear.

But, the play was not ended.

A veiled woman entered the hall, about the time that Dick finished speaking, and walked straight down toward the stage.

Suddenly she threw up her veil.

The face of a pale woman was disclosed, one older in experience and sorrow than in years, and one that had been handsome.

"My sister!"

That cry came from Esmond Earle, who had seen her enter.

He sprung up and ran toward her, with his arms outstretched.

But she motioned him to stop, and turning suddenly, faced the fellow who had registered at the hotel as Edwin Hargrave, and cried out:

"Paul Lynton, I find you at last! You did not suspect who I was, did you. I am your wife, whom you tried to murder in Mexico, and whom you did leave for dead. Now it is my turn, and you must die!"

With the words she flashed out a revolver and fired, but Esmond Earle struck up her arm and the bullet was buried harmlessly in the wall.

"It is for me to deal with him," he cried.

Lynton had sprung up, but Esmond had him covered.

"Come out to the street," he ordered, "and take the chance for your life that you do not deserve."

The woman tried to interfere, but it was useless, and the two men went out of doors.

A crowd poured after them, to witness the fight.

"Ten paces, and fire," said Earle.

No other word was spoken.

The two men paced off the required distance, backward, and then at the same moment both fired.

Paul Lynton fell forward upon his face, and died there without a struggle. A bullet of vengeance had pierced his heart.

But in such an hour of paramount excitement, this was no more than a passing incident. Back into the hall the crowd poured, to see what further was to be seen in connection with the case of main interest.

It looked as though it was all over, though, when suddenly, from the rear of the building, a figure in white appeared upon the stage.

It was the Nemesis of Nutmeg!

Head, face, and all was covered, and the appearance of the strange figure was truly ghostly.

"Men of Nutmeg," it spoke, "you have wit-

nessed a work of righteous vengeance. Twenty years ago, when I was but a mere babe, my father and mother, and all my brothers and sisters, were massacred by Stephen Barnthal and Samson Crapps, and eleven of their villainous followers. They were highway robbers in California. They fell upon my father and his party, as they were moving out of a mining-camp where they had made their fortune. All of the party were killed save three. These were myself and a young man who is known to you all—Fingal McFaddin. He has been my helper in this work. We were saved by his mother, who was the third one to escape.

"She cared for me until she died, three years ago, and told me the story of the horrible crime. She knew the names of some of the wretches, and when she died I made a vow that I would hunt them all to their death. You have seen how well I have done my awful work. With a powerful air-rifle, I have been a silent destroyer."

"Who be ye?" was the loud demand. "Who be ye?"

The white robe and hood, all in one piece, was thrown off, and there stood the Nemesis in the person of Edma Rulford.

Turning to Deadwood Dick, she remarked:

"You see my ghostly robe is lined with black. That accounts for my sudden disappearance when you saw me last. I threw it off and turned it in an instant, and you could not see me. But, facing the crowd again, 'one word more and I disappear forever from your midst. I, and I alone, took these thirteen lives. Fingal McFaddin is innocent of it all. He acted merely as my detective and helper.'"

"And it's proud I am of the service I have rendered, too," that individual exclaimed.

Throwing down the ghostly robe, Edma turned and walked off the stage the way she had come.

But after her sprung Esmond Earle.

He overtook her at the door, and, in spite of her objections, accompanied her to the hotel.

Only a very few words of their long talk need be quoted.

"Edma, be my wife," Earle urged.

"What! with my hands red with blood!" she cried.

"Just as you are," he assured.

The answer, finally, was: "Yes, if you so will it."

So our romance ends.

Next day saw Deadwood Dick and his party set out from the gulch.

The orphan girls were restored to their rights, married, and are happy in the riches that were rightfully theirs.

Esmond Earle and Edma Rulford, too, were soon wed, and, with Esmond's sister, settled at Edma's native place, where she desired to spend her life.

Nutmeg Bonanza still exists, and is a growing town. Old Hank Woolly is still there, as fat as ever. He sometimes talks over old times with the "boyees," and is not infrequently heard to say:

"Yas, Nutmeg hev seen some spicy days, and some big excitements, too; but of all the royal times o'ever did see, ther royalest was ther time thet I allus like ter speak of as

DEADWOOD DICK'S DAZZLE."

THE END.

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392 Romeo and the Reds; or, The Beleaguered Ranch.
404 Little Lariat; or, Pecan Pete's Big Rampage.
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536 Broadway Billy's "Dimkilty."
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615 Fighting Harry, the Chief of Chained Cyclone.
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447 New York Nat. A Tale of Tricks and Traps in Gotham.
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- 405 Deadwood Dick in Dead City.
- 410 Deadwood Dick's Diamonds.
- 421 Deadwood Dick in New York; or, A "Cute Case."
- 430 Deadwood Dick's Dust; or, The Chained Hand.
- 443 Deadwood Dick, Jr.
- 448 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Defiance; or, Nickel-Plate Ned.
- 458 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Full Hand.
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- 515 Deadwood Dick's Protegee.
- 522 Deadwood Dick's Three.
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- 534 Deadwood Dick's Death Hunt.
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- 554 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Gotham.
- 561 Deadwood Dick in Boston.
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- 578 Deadwood Dick, Jr. Afloat.
- 584 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Denver.
- 590 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Decree.
- 595 Deadwood Dick Jr. in Beelzebub's Basin.
- 600 Deadwood Dick Jr. at Coney Island.
- 606 Deadwood Dick Jr.'s Leadville Lay.
- 612 Deadwood Dick Jr. in Detroit.
- 618 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Cincinnati.
- 624 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Nevada.
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- 642 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Buffalo.
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- 654 Deadwood Dick, Jr. Among the Smugglers.
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- 277 Denver Doll, the Detective Queen.
- 281 Denver Doll's Victory.
- 285 Denver Doll's Decoy; or, Little Bill's Bonanza.
- 291 Turk the Boy Ferret.
- 296 Denver Doll's Drift; or, The Road Queen.
- 299 A No. 1, the Dashing Toll-Taker.
- 303 Liza Jane, the Girl Miner; or, The Iron-Nerved Sport.
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- 330 Little Quick-Shot; or, The Dead Face of Daggersville.
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- 339 Kangaroo Kit's Racket.
- 343 Manhattan Mike, the Bowery Blood.
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- 368 Yreka Jim, the Gold-Gatherer; or, The Life Lottery.
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- 416 High Hat Harry, the Base Ball Detective.
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- 434 Jim Beak and Pal, Private Detectives.
- 438 Santa Fe Sal, the Slasher.
- 436 Sealskin Sam, the Sparkler.

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- 7 The Flying Yankee; or, The Ocean Outcast.
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- 102 Dick Dead-Eye, the Boy Smuggler.
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- 216 Blown Bill, the Prince of the Reins.
- 222 Grit, the Bravo Sport; or, The Woman Trailer.
- 229 Crimson Kate; or, The Cowboy's Triumph.
- 237 Lone Star, the Cowboy Captain.
- 245 Merle, the Middy; or, The Freelance Heir.
- 250 The Midshipman Mutineer; or, Brandt, the Buccaneer.
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- 269 The Gold Ship; or, Merle, the Condemned.
- 276 Merle Monte's Cruise; or, "The Gold Ship" Chase.
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- 308 Keno Kit; or, Dead Shot Dandy's Double.
- 314 The Mysterious Marauder; or, The Boy Bugler's Trail.
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- 338 Seawolf, the Boy Lieutenant.
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- 468 Neptune Ned, the Boy Coaster.
- 474 Flora; or, Wizard Will's Vagabond Pard.
- 488 Ferrets Afloat; or, Wizard Will's Last Case.
- 487 Nevada Ned, the Revolver Ranger.
- 495 Arizona Joe, the Boy Pard of Texas Jack.
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- 508 The Royal Middy; or, The Shark and the Sea Cat.
- 507 The Hunted Midshipman.
- 511 The Outlawed Middy.
- 520 Buckskin Bill, the Comanche Shadow.
- 525 Brothers in Buckskin.
- 530 The Buckskin Bowers.
- 535 The Buckskin Rovers.
- 540 Captain Ku-Klux, the Marauder of the Rio.
- 545 Lieutenant Leo, the Son of Laftite.
- 550 Laftite's Legacy; or, The Avenging Son.
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- 565 Kent Kingdom, the Card King.
- 570 Camille, the Card Queen.
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- 597 The Young Texan Detective.
- 602 The Vagabond of the Mines.
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- 644 The Hercules Highwayman.
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- 656 Butterfly Billy's Man Hunt.
- 662 Butterfly Billy's Romance.
- 668 The Buccaneer Midshipman.

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- 8 Kansas King; or, The Red Right Hand.
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- 55 Dead-Eye, the Unknown Scout.
- 68 Border Robin Hood; or, The Prairie Rover.
- 158 Fancy Frank of Colorado; or, The Trapper's Trust.

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- 118 Will Somers, the Boy Detective.
- 122 Phil Hardy, the Boss Boy.
- 126 Playmate Pete; or, Nicodemus, the Dog Detective.
- 130 Detective Dick; or, The Hero in Rags.
- 142 Handsome Harry, the Bootblack Detective.
- 147 Will Wildfire, the Thoroughbred.
- 152 Black Bear, Will Wildfire's Racer.
- 157 Mike Merry, the Harbor Police Boy.
- 162 Will Wildfire in the Woods.
- 165 Billy Baggage, the Railroad Boy.
- 170 A Trump Card; or, Will Wildfire Wins and Loses.
- 174 Bob Rockett; or, Mysteries of New York.
- 179 Bob Rockett, the Bank Runner.
- 183 The Hidden Hand; or, Will Wildfire's Revenge.
- 187 Fred Halyard, the Life Boat Boy; or, The Smugglers.
- 189 Bob Rockett; or, Driven to the Wall.
- 196 Shadowed; or, Bob Rockett's Fight for Life.
- 206 Dark Paul, the Tiger King.
- 212 Dashing Dave, the Dandy Detective.
- 220 Tom Tanner; or, The Black Sheep of the Flock.
- 225 Sam Charcoal, the Premium Dandy.
- 235 Shadow Sam, the Messenger Boy.
- 242 The Two "Bloods"; or, Shenandoah Bill and His Gang.
- 252 Dick Dashaway; or, A Dakota Boy in Chicago.
- 262 The Young Sharps; or, Rolloking Mike's Hot Trail.
- 274 Jolly Jim, the Detective Apprentice.
- 289 Jolly Jim's Job; or, The Young Detective.
- 298 The Water-Hound; or, The Young Thoroughbred.
- 305 Dashaway, of Dakota; or, A Western Lad in Quaker City.
- 324 Ralph Ready, the Hotel Boy Detective.
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- 353 The Reporter-Detective; or, Fred Flyer's Blizzard.
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- 379 Larry, the Leveler; or, The Bloods of the Boulevard.
- 403 Firefly Jack, the River-Rat Detective.
- 423 The Lost Finger; or, The Entrapped Cashier.
- 428 Fred Flyer, the Reporter Detective.
- 432 Invisible Logan, the Pinkerton Ferret.
- 456 Billy Brick, the Jolly Vagabond.
- 466 Wide-Awake Jerry, Detective; or, Entombed Alive.
- 479 Detective Dodge; or, The Mystery of Frank Hearty.
- 488 Wild Dick Racket.
- 501 Boots, the Boy Fireman; or, Too Sharp for the Sharper.
- 566 The Secret Service Boy Detective.
- 596 Jimmy the Kid; or, A Lamb Among Wolves.
- 627 Tom Bruce of Arkansas; or, The Wolf in the Fold.
- 655 Plucky Paul, the Boy Speculator.
- 667 Bob and Sam, the Daisy Detectives.

BY OLL COOMES.

- 5 Vagabond Joe, the Young Wandering Jew.
- 13 The Dumb Spy.
- 27 Antelope Abe, the Boy Guide.
- 31 Keen-Knife, the Prince of the Prairies.
- 41 Lasso Jack, the Young Mustang.
- 58 The Border King; or, The Secret Fox.
- 71 Delaware Dick, the Young Ranger Spy.
- 74 Hawk-eye Harry, the Young Trapper Ranger.
- 83 Rollo, the Boy Ranger.
- 134 Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Rifleman.
- 143 Scar-Face Sam, the Silent Hunter.
- 146 Silver Star, the Boy Knight.
- 153 Eagle Kit, the Boy Demon.
- 163 Little Texas, the Young Mustang.
- 178 Old Solitary, the Hermit Trapper.
- 182 Little Hurricane, the Boy Captain.
- 202 Prospect Pete; or, The Young Outlaw Hunter.
- 208 The Boy Hercules; or, The Prairie Trampa.
- 218 Tiger Tom, the Texas Terror.
- 224 Dashing Dick; or, Trapper Tom's Castle.
- 228 Little Wildfire, the Young Prairie Nomad.
- 238 The Parson Detective; or, The Little Ranger.
- 243 The Disguised Guide; or, Wild Raven, the Ranger.
- 260 Dare-Devil Dan, the Young Prairie Ranger.
- 272 Minkskin Mike, the Boy Sharpshooter.
- 290 Little Foxfire, the Boy Spy.
- 300 The Sky Demon; or, Rainbolt, the Ranger.
- 384 Whip-King Joe, the Boy Ranchero.
- 409 Hercules; or, Dick, the Boy Ranger.
- 417 Webfoot Mose, the Tramp Detective.
- 422 Baby Sam, the Boy Giant of the Yellowstone.
- 444 Little Buckskin, the Young Prairie Centaur.
- 457 Wingedfoot Fred; or, Old Polar Saul.
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- 473 Old Tom Rattler, the Red River Epidemic.
- 482 Stonewall Bob, the Boy Trojan.
- 562 Blundering Basil, the Hermit Boy Trapper.
- 652 Don Barr, the Plains Freelance.
- 661 Old Kit Bandy's Deliverance.
- 670 Norway Nels, the Big Boy Mountaineer.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH.

- 23 Nick o' the Night; or, The Boy Spy of '76.
- 37 The Hidden Lodge; or, The Little Hunter.
- 47 Nightingale Nat; or, The Forest Captain.
- 64 Dandy Jack; or, The Outlaws of the Oregon Trail.
- 82 Kit Morefoot, the Wood-Hawk.
- 94 Midnight Jack; or, The Boy Trapper.
- 106 Old Frosty, the Guide; or, The White Queen.
- 128 Kiowa Charley, the White Mustang.
- 139 Judge Lynch, Jr.; or, The Boy Vigilante.
- 155 Gold Trigger, the Sport; or, The Girl Avenger.
- 169 Tornado Tom; or, Injun Jack From Red Core.
- 188 Ned Temple, the Border Boy.
- 198 Arkansas; or, The Queen of Fate's Revenge.
- 207 Navajo Nick, the Boy Gold Hunter.
- 215 Captain Bullet; or, Little Tonknot's Crusade.
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- 267 The Buckskin Detective.
- 279 Old Winch; or, The Buckskin Desperadoes.
- 294 Dynamite Dan; or, The Bowtie Blade of Gochetopa.
- 302 The Mountain Detective; or, The Trigger Bar Bally.
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- 425 Texas Trump, the Border Rattler.
- 436 Phil Flash, the New York Fox.
- 445 The City Vampire; or, Red Rolfe's Pigeon.
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- 470 The Boy Shadow; or, Felix Fox's Hunt.
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- 499 Single Sight, the One-Eyed Sport.
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- 521 Dodger Dick's Best Dodge.
- 528 Fox and Falcon, the Bowery Shadows.
- 538 Dodger Dick, the Dock Ferret.
- 543 Dodger Dick's Double; or, The Rival Boy Detectives.
- 553 Dodger Dick's Desperate Case.
- 563 Dodger Dick, the Boy Vidocq.
- 573 The Two Shadows.
- 582 Dodger Dick's Drop.
- 594 Little Lon, the Street-Singer Detective.
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- 626 The Champion Pards.
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